

Was Blind But Now I See

John 9:1-41

Today's set of Scripture readings is the last we had before our very first COVID lockdown, and before we would be forced apart for so long because of COVID lockdowns and restrictions.

I had no idea at the time what was coming. I was blind to it. But now I see better. How about you?

What has this past three years taught you, and what has it taught us?

What does it mean for us individually and as community today?

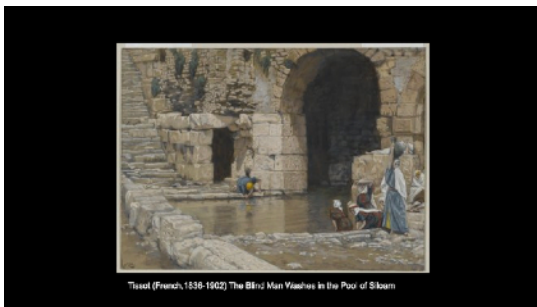
Let's pray...

Today in John 9, we meet this man born blind from birth.

Jesus is on a journey and meets this man who, we will find out, is also on a journey, a major spiritual journey. It's not unlike the journeys of people we've met in recent weeks in our gospel readings, such as Nicodemus, and the Samaritan woman at the well. Maybe it's like the journeys we make, too.

The disciples ask Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned? Was it this man or was it parents, that he was born blind?" The close disciples of Jesus do not understand the nature of sin. They still think that only those who sin have such illnesses.

Jesus tells the disciples, "How wrong you are!" Neither this man nor his parents caused this blindness by their sin. But this man will show you the grace of God by what I will do next. And Jesus says, "I am the light of the world."



When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent).

John 9:6-7

And here's a clue for you: don't forget this name. Then the man went and washed, and came back able to see.

Now the man's spiritual journey really begins, as people ask and challenge and reject him based on by whom and how he has been healed.

First, his neighbours are amazed at his healing. They're so amazed that some don't even think it's the same man. How were you healed and who healed you?



Did you hear the man's answer?

The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.'

John 9:11

The man called Jesus did this for me. Partly right. But the spiritual journey of the man still has some way to go.

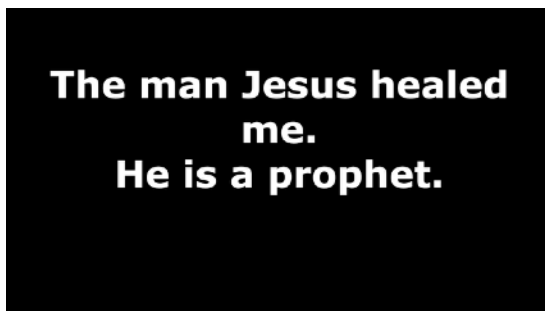
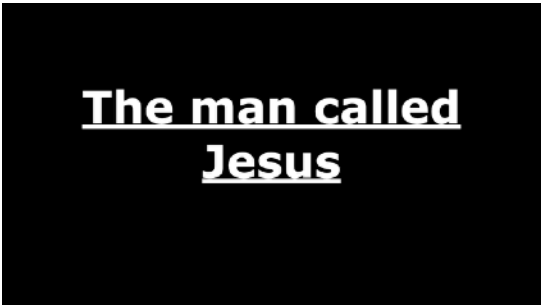
The neighbours and the crowd now take him to the Pharisees for interrogation.

They immediately call Jesus a sinner because this healing grace gift was given to the blind man on a Sabbath. But others are not so convinced. How can someone heal like this if he is not from God?

All the while, the question swirls in the air and in the minds and hearts... "Who really is this Jesus?"

"Well, you've been healed, who do you say he is?" they ask the man.

Note and listen carefully again to his response this time.



This time he says, "He is a prophet."

He's a man who speaks the word of God. The spiritual growth journey of the man healed continues.

The pressure grows.

The Jewish leaders start to call into question whether he was really blind at all, and whether there is any healing that's occurred. They want to turn this into "fake news", just like Matthew will record the Jewish leaders coming up with after Jesus' resurrection (see

Matthew 28).

The Jews now ask his parents. Was he blind? Who is this one who healed him?

They confirm he was blind but they are afraid to answer about Jesus. Fear and intimidation. The Jewish leaders are threatening to expel anyone who follows Jesus.

So they come back to the man again. I can't imagine the pressure this man is now facing. They demand that he denounce Jesus as a sinner. And prepare to denounce him and cut him off from community. What kind of healing is this? He must feel so alone.

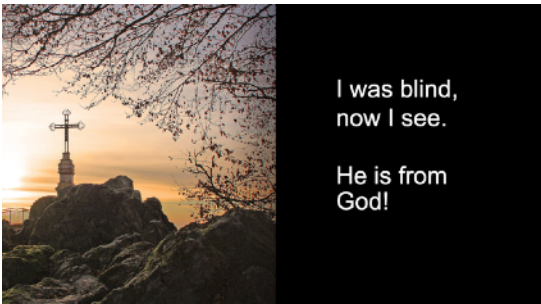
But the one who was sent to the pool of Siloam (which means "sent", remember) now wonderfully stands his ground and begins his witness. And what a witness he is. "I've already told you and you do not listen. I was blind now I see!"

"If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

Now, under pressure and intimidation, he says Jesus must be from God.

Jesus now hears of his story, and the healer comes again — just at the right time.

"Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

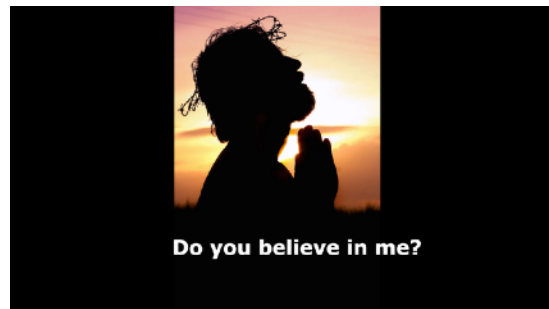


“Who is he?” is the man’s response. And Jesus reveals himself fully now to the man:

“You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” He said, “Lord, I believe.”

John 9:37-38

“Lord, I believe.” The spiritual journey of this man reaches its summit. “Do you believe in me?” Jesus asks. “Lord, I believe.”



The man healed truly sees, in contrast to the religious leaders who are blind.

How has COVID with its lockdowns and struggles affected you and your faith? In March 2020, the Church Council met in the community room at Station Street to try to understand what was about to unfold, and prepare for it. I had no real idea, I have to say.

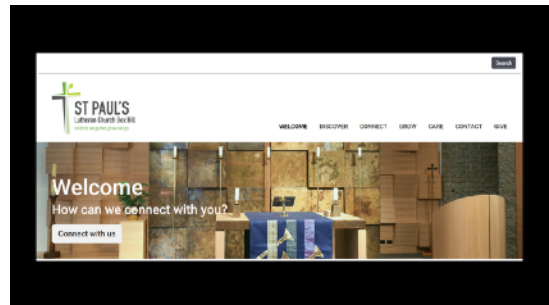
It’s affected us all in so many different ways. Our life as community was thrown into chaos. For many, it was a time of darkness. During the lockdowns, we produced a little resource (still available on our website) called ‘Growing Through Times of Change’. I commend it to you in all the seasons of change for you. Because the journey of faith is one of change and challenge and growth and healing, as individuals and as community.

And Jesus, the healer, is here.

Jesus the healer is here for you... for us as community. COVID, life, sickness, death, relationships, desire for and loss of community, even in the church, bring us challenges..

Jesus, the healer is here.

How are you doing today? I’d love to hear from you.



For the man born blind, healing brings physical sight, but also a journey of spiritual ‘eternal life faith’ sight, in the face of opposition and the loss of community, as he is driven out by the Pharisees. For him, healing must also include restoration and promise of community. And that’s why we must read on into John 10, where Jesus continues to teach and heal. “I am the Good Shepherd. I lay my life down for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also. And they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock and one shepherd.”

Healing includes life in community. One flock and one Shepherd. How vital this was for this man rejected by the Pharisees. How important this was for Jesus’ disciples, who first heard the gospel at a time when those who were the witnesses, who saw Jesus, who saw the crucified and resurrected Jesus, had now died, and the community was in change and turmoil. How important it is for us today, emerging from COVID, and as we try to navigate a way forward in our beloved LCA with its impasse and differences on matters of ordination. We are made for community life together with Jesus.

And we meet as community, not at the pool of Siloam, but at the place of water and healing Word in Baptism.



And this is the place from which we are sent to people in need of the healer, Jesus the Son of God. We are indeed God's healed — perhaps wounded but healed — and sent ones to show God to people in our lives. Who are you being sent to?

I often hear from people who are witnessing to people in their lives. People they love so much who don't seem to respond. Don't despair, dear fellow healed SENT ones. Look to Jesus. And witness of him in your life in love for others.

As we've seen in recent weeks with Nicodemus, with the Samaritan woman at the well, and today with the man healed and restored, the journey to faith and the journey to community in Jesus' flock may have many steps on the way. God has a call for you. And he is with you. You are never alone in it. Jesus, the healer and Good Shepherd, is surely with you each step of the journey, and forms disciples and community by his healing through our witness.

So, go, you who are sent, and share your faith: "Lord, I believe." Amen.



Video of the service including the above address: <https://youtu.be/azErna-HKog>