

March 19, 2023
 Open Our Eyes
 John 9:1-41
 St. Mary's in the Hills, Lake Orion
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I propose to show that we don't always see God acting, because it just doesn't make sense to us, so that those hearing this sermon will open their eyes to God acting all around.

May the God who Creates...

What if holiness doesn't show up the way we think it should? What if God is acting and we don't get it, because it doesn't seem to be happening in a way we understand? Or maybe with whom we might expect?

What if God doesn't do what we planned?

The good news is we wouldn't be the first to make that mistake. Witness the man blind from birth.

Jesus called him over, spat on the ground made some mud with his saliva and then, seemingly with the man's permission, rubbed the mud all over his eyes. Then told the man to go wash it all off in the pool of Siloam.

The man washed and well, suddenly the man who had never seen a day in his life, when the mud is gone, he can see.

*Do we believe that God is capable of using the mud and muck of our world to change everything, to give us new insights, where there was only darkness and despair?
 Open our eyes.*

Then the folks around, the folks from the town, who had seen him every day of his life, now some of them cannot tell if it's the same guy. Because the ailment that they hung his entire life on, the disability that they used to define and ignore this man—well its gone and they are confused. They now seem to be the ones who cannot see.

*Are we blinded by our initial assessment of someone, and fail to remain curious once we have mentally allocated them to a particular group, to which we think they belong?
 Open our eyes.*

The towns people not at all liking the formerly blind man's explanation of how, some man called him over and rubbed mud in his eyes and then sent him to wash and now he can now see, the townspeople don't like this explanation. So they bring him to the religious authorities. Presumably to make him explain for real. The pharisees the religious attorneys, have plenty of questions and approach the man (as we say in seminary) with a hermeneutic of suspicion:

How can this be?

Wait a minute—did you say this healing happened on the sabbath?

Acting on the Sabbath—that's a sin.

The formerly blind man is pretty matter of fact, "What I know is I can see."

Do we believe that we will not hear of God's mercy and love, from people who hold vastly different theological or political beliefs? I do not agree with you on so many issues, so I'm sure I will never hear God's word from you.

Open our eyes.

So then the religious authorities decide perhaps the man is delusional. Let's ask his parents.

Is this your son? Has he always been blind? If so, how can he see?

Yup he's our son. He's always been blind. We have no idea how this happened, how about asking him and leaving us alone?

Ironically are we unable to see God's ways or hear God's hopes from members of our family? Does their familiarity, dilute our sense of awe of what may be happening in their lives? Open our eyes.

So once more, this time with feeling the religious authorities ask the man who was formerly blind, "How can this be?"

You must be one of his disciples—surely you are in on this hoax!

We follow Moses. We have no idea who this man is who has done this...

So, the formerly blind man says again, "Seems to me, if this guy pulled this off, gave me my sight he must be from God, whether or not you know him.

Are we blind to how God and with whom God works and thus fail to initiate or tend to relationships with people who seem to exist mostly in the shadows and on the margins? Open our eyes.

To which they reply you, a sinner, are trying to teach us? Get on out of here.

Open our eyes.

Friends, this passage is almost comedic in its description of Jesus transforming a man's life. While I'm happy to laugh at these folks, mock their blindness of God's work in the world. I know enough about myself to also see me in this story. I wonder if you too might see yourself?

Open our eyes.

God's ways are not our ways. God does not and will not remain in the boxes that we happily construct. Boxes we make so we can define and confine all that is Holy, so that we can limit God's power to that which is palpable to our tender enlightened souls. Our God, try as we might, shall not be domesticated. For our God, is both incarnate and transcendent, here with us now and utterly beyond all we know.

Rather than limiting God to our beliefs and our tightly held values, may we continually be the people open to seeing and ready to point towards God's work in the world. Work that may blow our minds and explode our values, but always leave us with hope, healing and a scent of incandescent holiness that carries us all along closer to God's Holy HOME.

Friends, do we have enough faith to believe that God acts?

That is my question for me and for you.