

## **Come and See that You Can't See: *John 9***

Norwalk Christian Church, February 11, 2018, Narrative Lectionary 4th Year, Year B, Epiphany

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The very first time I ever preached to you, was on this passage. I'm sure that's not news to you. When you heard the scripture being read, I'm confident you began to remember everything from that first sermon, almost 4 years ago. I could just sit down right now since you remember that sermon.

Our story today is an incredible passage, and thank you to our readers for helping to bring it to life. As we have seen, the Gospel of John is filled with these encounters with Jesus. These dramatic scenes where people are faced with who Jesus is, and they leave changed. But people around them cannot believe it. Jesus doesn't fit into their world view.

The first time I preached this text with you, I was struck by what I don't know. I called the sermon, "I Don't Know," and the longer I am in ministry, the more sermons I preach, the more experiences I have--the more I realize that I do not know. About life, about God.

But the religious leaders in this story knew. "I do not know" was not something in their vocabulary. You've met these people. They know the way the world is supposed to work. The way things are supposed to be. It's all right there, in the law. Just read it, and it will be explained.

Blind men don't all of the sudden see. It's impossible. Because this man is a sinner. How could he not be, since he's blind?? And good things don't happen to sinners. And this Jesus...well, he's a heretic. And a sinner like him cannot do miracles like the blind man claimed happened.

There are no questions. No room for doubt. They have it all figured out.

Sickness, disease, bad luck--it was all easily explained. You did something wrong and this was your punishment. Bad things happen to bad people.

Aren't you glad that in our world today, we have moved beyond such elementary, black and white, cause and effect thinking!

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So, I'm a pretty big fan of West Wing. If you haven't seen it, it's a show about a fictitious US President and his staff. It's amazing, and I just started re-watching the show...again. There's a podcast I like, West Wing Weekly, where two guys dissect every episode. So, I watch an episode, then listen to the podcast about that episode. I know what you're thinking...I'm pretty awesome.

Well, the other day, I watched the second episode again. It's title is, *Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc*. It's a latin phrase, mentioned in a scene by President Bartlet. They're talking about his humor. He keeps getting into trouble for making smart, insulting jokes. Like the joke he told on the campaign in Texas. A reporter asked him why he didn't spend more time campaigning in Texas, and President Bartlet replied, "Because I don't look good in big hats."

Well, his staff think that joke cost him a win in Texas. And President introduces us to this latin lawyer phrase. *Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc*. It's a logical fallacy which assumes that because one event happened, it caused the following event.

A lot of people have a *Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc* faith.  
 Because I prayed today, I got a front row parking space.  
 Because I did something wrong, nothing is going right for me today.  
 Because the family was poor, they must've done something to deserve it.  
 Because the man was born blind, either he or his parents must've sinned.

It's a way of explaining the world. This thing happened because this other thing caused it.

It's also a way of excusing ourselves from responsibility. If your situation is caused by something you did, I don't need to feel sorry for you.

This is the issue our country is having right now with Dreamers. No matter their situation, their story, their life--no matter that they were born in the United States. We don't have to feel sorry for them. We don't have to show mercy. The law's the law. Their parents sinned, so they should pay the penalty.

*Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc* faith.

So, when the Pharisees encounter the Blind Man, they already know his story. They don't need to get to know him, to hear his side of things, or to feel sorry for him. It's obvious. He's a sinner. And this Jesus who allegedly healed him is a sinner to. Thus, none of this could happen the way the blind man said.

And they ask him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" And the Blind Man keeps telling them, "I do not know...[but] one thing I do know, I was blind, but now I see."

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Think with me for a moment. Have you ever had a moment where what you thought was true was challenged by facts right in front of your face? Where your world view, your way of explaining things, was called into question, and you were forced to either deny what was right in front of you, or change your thinking and see the world anew.

Think about that moment. How did it feel? Was it disorienting? What did you have to give up? What changed? How did the world look differently afterwards?

The world is black and white...until it's not.

Maybe you once said, when I have kids, they'll never act like that. And then, kids come and, well...they ALL act like that, don't they?

You encounter someone from your past, someone who used to be no good. How could they ever be different. And then, years later, they reach out to you. They've changed. They're making amends. But can you trust them? People don't change--do they?

The dad who always cracked gay jokes, always blamed the faults of the world on the immorality of homosexuals...has his world rocked when his son, whom he loves dearly, comes out to him. And he can deny it, turn his back on his son, and stay with what he knows. Or he can take a step into the blindness, and watch his whole world change.

In that moment, we have a choice. To continue to see the world as we've always seen it. Or to take that step into the darkness.

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In our story, the Pharisees are the ones with sight, and yet they cannot see what is right in front of them.

The man who had been blind--he is the only one who really sees. He may not understand it all, but he knows that Jesus took spit, made mud, and rubbed it on his eyes. And now, this man, born blind, can now see.

When the Pharisees confront Jesus at the end of the story, Jesus says to them, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." And the Pharisees reply, "Surely we are not blind, are we?"

Sometimes blind people see. Sometimes heretic preachers perform miracles. Sometimes what we know with all our heart to be true--is not. Sometimes the evidence is standing right in front of our faces, and we can't see past our own nose.

Sometimes, we sing, I once was blind, but now I see.  
And sometimes, the song changes, I once could see, but now I've become blind.

Regardless of the song, it's still the song of salvation. God, interrupting the way we thought the world always was, and showing us something new.

May we open our eyes--or may we close them, as the case may be--and let. God. Surprise us!