

Message for March 22, 2020 –  
"Seeing is Believing" by Pastor John Dillon

IN 23<sup>RD</sup> PSALM WE READ:

**The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.**

**Surely<sup>[e]</sup> goodness and mercy<sup>[f]</sup> shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD  
my whole life long.**

"I SHALL NOT WANT "WELL THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE WANTING AT THE MOMENT.

WANTING SECURITY, WANTING SAFETY, WANTING REASSURANCE, WANTING HUMAN CONTACT,  
WANTING LIFE TO GET BACK TO NORMAL!

BUT "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD" MY GUARDIAN, MY PROTECTOR, MY SAFETY, MY ANSWER TO ALL  
MY QUESTIONS, MY SALVATION FROM EVERYTHING THAT THREATENS ME

AND I SHALL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD  
MY WHOLE LIFE LONG"

THIS IS THE GOOD NEWS TO COMFORT AND STRENGTHEN US IN THIS TIME OR TRIAL AND  
TRIBULATION.

NOW IS A TIME FOR FAITH AND HOPE AND TRUST, NOT PANIC AND DESPAIR!

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TALKING FOR YEARS ABOUT HOW OUR WAY OF LIFE IS CRUMBLING AT LEAST  
AROUND THE EDGES. CROWDS NO LONGER FLOCK TO BOWLING LEAGUES, OR BOY SCOUTS OR  
CHURCH...THE WAY THEY USED TO.

IN LIGHT OF THESE CONCERNS, SOME PEOPLE LOOK NOSTALGICALLY TO THE COMMUNITIES OF THE  
PAST, IN WHICH PEOPLE WERE MORE CONNECTED, ATTENTIVE TO ONE ANOTHER, AND  
SUPPORTIVE. THAT WAS WHEN PEOPLE KNEW HOW TO TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER—

OR DID THEY?

## **John 9**

**As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. <sup>4</sup> We<sup>[a]</sup> must work the works of him who sent me<sup>[b]</sup> while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." <sup>6</sup> 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, <sup>7</sup> saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see**

I WANT YOU TO DO SOMETHING RIGHT NOW.

- 1) WASH YOUR HANDS
- 2) WITHOUT TOUCHING YOUR FACE HOLD YOUR HAND BEFORE YOUR EYES. WHAT CAN YOU SEE? NEXT TO NOTHING!
- 3) NOW MOVE YOUR HAND SLOWLY AWAY AND NOTICE HOW THE LIGHT BREAKS IN AROUND THE EDGES AND YOU START TO SEE MORE AND MORE UNTIL
- 4) YOUR HAND IS FAR ENOUGH AWAY TO SEE THE WHOLE PICTURE AND TO SEE THAT YOUR HAND WHICH WAS BLOCKING OUT EVERYTHING IS NOW JUST ONE SMALL PART OF THE PICTURE.

THAT EXERCISE AND THIS TEXT HELPS US TO SEE THE STRUGGLE TO BELIEVE. SO MANY OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE STORY ARE UNABLE TO BELIEVE WHAT THEY SO PLAINLY SEE IN FRONT OF THEM. THEY ONLY SEE THEIR OWN HAND WHICH IS BLINDING THEM ..... TO THE DETRIMENT OF BELIEF, COMMUNITY AND TRANSFORMATION

John Cont... **The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" <sup>9</sup> Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." <sup>10</sup> But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" <sup>11</sup> He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." <sup>12</sup> They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."**

THE NEIGHBORS DO NOT RECOGNIZE THE MAN WHO WAS BORN BLIND.???

THIS IS SO ODD. THE MAN HAS LIVED IN THEIR MIDST ALL HIS LIFE; THEY HAVE INTERACTED WITH HIM, PERHAPS HELPED HIM CROSS THE STREET OR DRAW WATER; THEY HAVE WORSHIPED WITH HIM.

WHY DO THEY FAIL TO RECOGNIZE HIM AFTER HE IS HEALED? IS IT BECAUSE THE ONLY MARKER OF HIS IDENTITY WAS HIS BLINDNESS? HAS THE FACT THAT HE WAS DIFFERENTLY ABLED BEEN THE ONLY THING THEY COULD EVER SEE IN HIM?

John Cont..<sup>13</sup> **They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. <sup>14</sup> Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see."**

**<sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath."**

**But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided.**

**<sup>17</sup> So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet.**

THE PHARISEES DO NOT WANT TO HEAR OR BELIEVE THE MAN'S STORY, BECAUSE IT OPPOSES THE STORY THEY WANT TO TELL. THEY WANT JESUS TO BE THE SINNER, NOT THE HERO OF THE STORY; THEY WANT ANOTHER EXPLANATION, ONE THAT LEAVES THEM IN CONTROL AND UNDISTURBED, CONTENT WITH NO CHALLENGE TO TRUST GOD IS POWERFUL AND PRESENT AND ACTIVE. THEY HAVE NO HOPE, NO FAITH, NO TRUST IN THE VERY GOD THEY CLAIM TO FOLLOW.

John cont...<sup>18</sup> **The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight <sup>19</sup> and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" <sup>20</sup> His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; <sup>21</sup> but 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." <sup>22</sup> His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus<sup>[c]</sup> to be the Messiah<sup>[d]</sup> would be put out of the synagogue. <sup>23</sup> Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him.**

EVEN HIS FAMILY BACKS AWAY FROM HIM, AND HIS PARENTS PUT THEIR OWN SAFETY BEFORE HIS WELFARE. MAYBE WE CAN UNDERSTAND AN OLDER COUPLE BEING RELUCTANT TO TAKE A STAND AGAINST THE COMMUNITY TO RISK SACRIFICING THEIR HOME, WORK, AND COMMUNITY FOR THEIR SON,

BUT WOULD WE NOT EXPECT THEM TO CELEBRATE WITH HIM, TO BE JOYFUL OVER HIS HEALING? THERE IS NOTHING OF THAT IN THIS TEXT. THE PARENTS' FEAR OVERWHELMS THEIR JOY, AND THEY ABANDON THEIR SON TO THE AUTHORITIES.

john cont...<sup>24</sup> **So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." <sup>25</sup> He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." <sup>26</sup> They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup> He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" <sup>28</sup> Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup> We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."**

**<sup>30</sup> The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God**

**does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. <sup>32</sup> Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." <sup>34</sup> They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.**

ALMOST EVERYBODY FAILS THE MAN BORN BLIND.

THE COMMUNITY FAILS. THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES FAIL. THE FAMILY FAILS. THE ONLY TRUSTWORTHY FIGURES IN THIS STORY ARE THE MAN BORN BLIND AND JESUS.

THE MAN TELLS THE TRUTH, AND EVEN IN THE FACE OF THREATS, THE ABANDONMENT OF HIS COMMUNITY AND FAMILY, AND EXPULSION, HE STICKS TO HIS GUNS. I WAS BLIND, BUT NOW I SEE. AGAIN, AND AGAIN AND AGAIN, THE MAN WITNESSES TO THE SAVING GRACE HE HAS EXPERIENCED IN JESUS CHRIST. JESUS IS THE ONLY ONE THE MAN CAN TRUST.

John cont...<sup>35</sup> **Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"<sup>[e]</sup> <sup>36</sup> He answered, "And who is he, sir?<sup>[f]</sup> Tell me, so that I may believe in him." <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." <sup>38</sup> He said, "Lord,<sup>[g]</sup> I believe." And he worshiped him**

IT IS JESUS WHO TRANSFORMS. IT IS JESUS WHO HEALS. IT IS JESUS WHO STANDS WITH THE MAN IN LOVE.

THEN TO ALL THE OTHERS AND TO US

John cont...<sup>39</sup> **Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind."<sup>40</sup> Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" <sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.**

The irony in John's story, of course, is that the blind man receives his sight, but everyone else in the story loses theirs—not their physical vision, but their capacity to believe and understand what they have witnessed.

Without exception, neighbors, Pharisees, and parents are unable to see in this event that

**"The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.**

**Surely<sup>[e]</sup> goodness and mercy<sup>[f]</sup> shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD  
my whole life long"**

JESUS IS THE ONLY ONE THE MAN CAN TRUST AND He IS THE ONLY ONE WE CAN TRUST

IN TRYING TIMES, BURDENED BY FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY WE ARE BLIND TO GOD'S POWER, PRESENCE AND GRACE ...IT IS LIKE SOMETIMES WHEN THE SUN IS REALLY BRIGHT, WE NEED TO SQUINT OR SHUT OUR EYES.

THE BRIGHTNESS SEEMS DANGEROUS TO US, AND THE REFLEX IS AUTOMATIC.  
IN JOHN 9: THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD SHINES BRIGHT, AND THE COMMUNITY, THE PHARISEES, AND THE MAN'S FAMILY SHUT THEIR EYES IN SELF-DEFENSE.

THAT IS THE INTUITIVE THING TO DO, RIGHT?

WRONG.

IN THIS TEXT, EVERYTHING IS COUNTERINTUITIVE. THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS IN OUR MIDST, AND WE NEED NOT SHUT OUR EYES. IN FACT, THE BEST THING TO DO IS TO OPEN OUR EYES, WIDE. WE WILL NOT BE BLINDED BY THE LIGHT. WE WILL BE SAVED.