

Fourth Sunday of Lent
Sermon for March 2, 2008
Raymond Raney

1 Samuel 16:1-13
Psalm 23
Ephesians 5:8-14
John 9:1-41

Born blind: that's hard to imagine. Being born blind. Never to see the light. Never to have seen a sunrise. Never to have seen a sunset. Never to have seen the wind as it moves through a field of grass. Never to have seen the face of your mother or your father. Never to have seen anything. To live in darkness – relying on what you can feel or hear or smell or taste.

To be deprived of all that we, as sighted people, take for granted – being free to walk about and not worry about falling over what we can't see.

Stumbling is easy enough even when you have your sight. The disciples stumbled all the time, and so did the Pharisees. And if they didn't stumble on their own, Jesus would trip them up. Here we are given ear to the disciples wanting to know WHY this man was born blind? What sin did he commit? What sin did his parents commit? Who sinned? Whose fault is it that this man was born blind.

We may think: they don't understand. Poor ignorant peasants. Obviously, this was just some flaw in this man's genetic code that robbed him of his sight. It's not sin that's at fault. It's nobody's fault. The man's just blind.

But that's not what Jesus explains. It's not that stuff just happens. This man was born blind so that God's glory can be revealed. So Jesus makes a little mud and sends the man off to wash, and VOILA – he can see.

Can you imagine what it must have been like for him?

Having your sight restored I can relate to. Then at least you've seen what the world looks like. You have an idea of what lies about you. You have at least seen the world. That I know. I remember when I was in the sixth grade, my teacher called my parents in. He advised them that I needed to have my eyes checked. You see, I had gone up to him that October and apologized for not being able to copy what was on the board as quickly as everyone else because of using my binoculars hindered my writing. I had brought a pair of toy binoculars to school to read the board from my seat near the back of the class. He'd thought it was a joke. I didn't know that anything was wrong.

After the process of testing and being fitted, I recall what it was like to look out from my living room and see the trees. It was a wonder. No longer were the trees this great mass of

green; I could actually see each leaf waving in the wind. The details I had missed for I don't know how long were suddenly brought sharply into focus.

But being born blind, that's beyond what I can even imagine. To suddenly be able to see what the world looks like. To have the flood of light bombard your eyes and tell you what the world is. To suddenly know what those things you've heard look like. And to realize that all those men of power around you, who have been born with eyes that worked, cannot see the simple truth that you see.

Three times they ask him, and three times he tells them. This is what he did and this is what happened. Pish-posh they reply. He can't have done it. He's a sinner. It's the Sabbath. It didn't happen.

The man is puzzled, but he answers from his simple sight: "I don't know if Jesus is a sinner: One thing I know – I was blind – and now I see."

The authorities, the arbiters of right and wrong and the keepers of the law, dismiss the simplicity of the truth revealed here. "Go away – you're covered in sin." And he leaves.

Jesus opened his eyes, and comes to him again, and reveals a deeper truth. "You were blind and now you see before you the Son of Man." The man sees and believes. The authorities do not.

Though they have their sight, they cannot see. Sometimes it's like that for us. We look but we don't see.

In some ways, we are all born blind. We require a parent, a friend, a teacher, someone who opens our eyes to the larger world around us. Someone who can help us put on the glasses of insight and see all that God has created, and to feel the light of God's love on our faces.

It's just so easy to get used to it all. I find myself numbed to the wonders I encounter every day. And then, I read of a man who was given a gift the wealth of which I cannot begin to imagine, and I begin to take the time to look and see.

The sun peeking over the mountains. The tint of color on the clouds. The wisps of grasses on the plain. The smiles on people's faces. Each and every breath I take.

Miracles. They are all around us – if we just take a moment and look.