

Anybody wear glasses? Or contact lenses? Or had surgery to correct eyesight? Me, too—all three, to tell you the truth.

Well, all of us who said yes to these questions, have had this happen: The first time we experienced the correction of our vision, it was like a miracle! We could see all the things which we had been missing. Maybe they were far away, or up close, but now we could see them! It was a wonderful thing! It was a great blessing!

Well, in today’s Scripture lesson, from the Gospel of John, what happened was even better. Jesus gave sight, miraculously, to a man who had been born blind.

Now, you would think that everyone who knew that this happened would be rejoicing about it, or at least thinking kind and pleasant thoughts. However, it became a controversy.

It became a controversy because some of the people (the religious leaders, that is) did not like Jesus, and were afraid that they would be losing power to him. People, unfortunately, do not like to let go of any of their power.

Sometimes, like in this situation, they can even find a reason (even a flimsy reason) to pin on a person whom they fear is taking their power. In this case, they made the argument that the healing which Jesus had done (the MIRACULOUS HEALING!) was a form of working on the Sabbath, and so should be condemned as such.

This controversy got longer and longer, and the man’s parents were even brought into it, and this was their version.

“Samuel, I’m telling you! If I hear one more person ask what I did to cause my son’s blindness, I’m going to hit him with my cookpot!”

The elderly Jew reached out to stroke his wife’s shoulders. “Sarah, Sarah. Enough,” he said. “We’ve been through all this a hundred times.”

Benjamin was the light of their lives, the child for whom they had hoped for so long. But light was something that had no meaning for him. Benjamin had been born blind. Every day they had listened to the townspeople ask: “What did you do

to cause his blindness?” Samuel and Sarah had searched their minds, their very souls, and still they did not know. It couldn’t have been Benjamin’s fault. He’d never had a chance to offend anyone. So it must be theirs. But what had they done that was so horrible that their child deserved to suffer?

No one ever asked how they could help Benjamin. Only what his parents had done wrong. Even today it had happened again. That group of men from out of town had seen her son begging by the side of the road and she had heard one ask their leader the old question. All afternoon she had been pondering the answer she’d overheard. He had said, “It’s not anyone’s fault. It’s so God’s work can be shown through this man’s life.” What had he meant by that? And who was he?

In the middle of her reverie the door burst open and a disheveled man plunged through. He was dripping wet and grasping wildly at everything. At first she did not recognize him. Then he turned toward her. She heard herself gasp as she gazed into the familiar eyes of her son—eyes that now returned her gaze. “Benjamin? Benjamin!”

He whooped as he swung his mother high above him and then gently set her down and held her close. He was like a child again. The world was brand new to him—wonderful and bright.

His father and mother knelt beside him, their hands exploring his face. “Benjamin! What happened? Can you really see?”

He looked up and for the first time in his life, they saw tears in his eyes. “I don’t really know how it happened. A man, the one they call Jesus, knelt beside me on the road. He asked me if I wanted to see. Then I felt something cool on my eyelids—it turned out to be mud. He told me to go wash in the pool of Siloam, so I did. Then when I pulled my head out of the water it was as if scales were falling from my eyes, and the light—I finally know what you mean by *light*—it was pouring in!

“I began running wildly, touching everything I could—*seeing* it for the first time! It was incredible! But then people started crowding around me, shouting questions at me. They took me before the Pharisees who started interrogating me. It was as though I were on trial! Question after question!”

The sound of an angry fist on the open door interrupted their reunion.irate voices from outside called for Sarah and Samuel. They were ordered to appear before the Pharisees.

Amazed and confused, they could scarcely keep their minds on what they were being asked. It seemed so impossible, such a miracle. All they wanted to do was to sit with their son—look at him and rejoice that, for the first time he could look back at them.

“Yes, he is our son,” they said. “Yes, he was born blind.” Questions and more questions. What did they want? Sarah struggled, her anger flushing her cheeks. Samuel laid a restraining hand on her arm. She knew. He didn’t have to tell her. They had spent most of their lives trying to find out what they had done to cause their son’s blindness; they were not going to speak now and risk angering God’s representatives. “Ask him yourselves,” was Samuel’s wry comment as they left.

Sarah leaned heavily on her husband’s arm as they left the crowd behind. “Did we do the right thing?” she said. “What should we have said, Samuel?”

Samuel sighed and turned to his wife. “For thirty years we have asked that,” he said, “but only now do I feel that we have truly done something wrong. We both know what the man, Jesus, did for Benjamin. Why couldn’t I say it?”

“You know why, Samuel,” said Sarah. “You heard their threats. It has been hard for us to fight back the rumors all these years that we were at fault for what happened to Benjamin. But now, we would have really ended up being outcasts.”

Between clenched teeth Samuel barely whispered. “Is that all we’ve learned—only to fear the God who would grant us such a precious gift, but not to honor his prophet? All this time I was sure we had not failed our son. Now I am not so sure anymore.” (Story by Phyllis Williams Provost, in Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, John)

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I think that his parents did let him down. They had always wished for their son . . . Oh, let’s go ahead and call him Benjamin. They had always wished for their son, Benjamin, to have his sight. Yet, when Benjamin was miraculously given his sight, and there are questions, they, his parents wimped out and showed weakness and cowardice.

The man himself, however did not do that. Through the whole story, Benjamin witnessed to the miracle and to Jesus, as the worker of the miracle.

Benjamin is a great example for us.

We are Christians. We believe in Jesus. He is God's Son, our Lord and our Savior. Jesus has done a lot for each one of us.

Take a minute and think about that. Isn't there at least one thing which we can think of, which the Lord has done in our lives?

Well, then we need to believe and to say so. I'm not saying that has to be done every minute of the day, or anything. But when the matter arises in conversation, go ahead and say it, "The Lord has really blessed me."

There may well be doubters. "Jesus is still doing things which seem to the unbeliever far too good and far too wonderful to be true." (The Gospel of John, volume 2, by William Barclay) But they are.

Back to the Scripture. Even though all this happened, Benjamin ended up getting kicked out by the religious leaders. My Bible notes summed this up perfectly in only three words. About verse 34, the notes say: "Anger usurps reason." (Oxford Annotated New Revised Standard Version of the Bible)

Or, as it has been put using more words: "But the moment insult and abuse and threat enter into an argument, it ceases to be an argument and becomes a contest in bitterness. If we become angry and resort to wild words and hot threats, all we prove is that our case is disturbingly weak." (Barclay)

But, Jesus then sought out Benjamin, and gave him even more than eyesight. Jesus gave this man sight for his spirit and for his soul. After all, as he said himself, that is what Jesus came into the world for, so that those who do not see may see.

May we always see what Jesus has done for us.

May we always believe what Jesus has done for us.

And may we always say what Jesus has done for us. Amen.

Sent by Reverend Sally J. DeMasters, March 22, 2020.