

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

*8The 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?" 9Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." 10But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" 11He 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." 12They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."*

*13They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. 14Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 15Then 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." 16Some 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. 17So 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." 18The 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 19and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" 20His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21but 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." 22His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. 23Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." 24So 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." 25He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." 26They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" 27He 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?" 28Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." 30The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. 31We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. 32Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. 33If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." 34They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.*

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

*39Jesus 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." 40Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" 41Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.*

They should have had a party. The neighbors, the parents, the Pharisees, Jesus and his disciples all should have had a party that day. He sees! First time in his life! No more begging, no more tapping around with that white cane, no more accidents when objects are out of place in his home! He sees!

Instead of joy: disbelief – is this really the same man who had been blind?

Was he really blind from birth?

Is this man really your son?

Something new had happened – Jesus healed this man born blind on the Sabbath – and he did it by working – spitting on the ground – gathering the moistened soil and shaping it – putting the mud on the man’s eyes and telling him to go and wash. By every standard Jesus had broken the holiness of the Sabbath – by every standard except God’s, it seems. God was doing a new thing in Jesus.

They should have had a party. But they had God confined in the cage of their religion and they did not want to let God out. If God could be free there is no telling what God might do. And so they missed their chance for a party that day. The religious leaders ended up kicking the man out.

But Jesus found him – invited him – and the man believed.

Then Jesus spoke a word for all the world to hear: “I came into the world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.”

What is God capable of doing in this congregation right now? Is God capable of forming and shaping us into a people generous in love and in giving? Is God capable of enabling all of us to forgive the sins that have been committed against us? Is God capable of giving us a hunger for God’s word that will be greater than our hunger for pleasure and entertainment? Is God such a great God that God could do that? According to the word Jesus spoke God can do all of those things in us if we know that we are blind. But if not.....

God’s own Son – God’s very self - gave sight to a man born blind. But the best people – the most religious people – the most sincere and dedicated and hard-working people did not rejoice over what he had done. They were so attached to what God had done and said in the past that they could not receive Jesus – the one in whom God was at work in their present.

It is like they had God domesticated, tamed. And Jesus came and did not stay within the fences they had built for God. A blind beggar was given sight by Jesus – not just physical sight but the gift of seeing the glory of God in Jesus.

We worship Jesus along with that man who had once been blind. But after all these years do we have Jesus tamed, domesticated? Do we keep Jesus on a leash so that he will not stray too far from where we want to walk? Do we offer him the biscuit of our repentance so that he can do the trick of forgiveness? Do we keep him penned up here so that he can not get out into the places we go during the week?

The one who opened the eyes of that man born blind cannot be tamed or leashed or penned up. He is still bringing God right into life through the Holy Spirit – opening eyes and ears and hearts. Will our eyes be opened to see the poor, our ears to hear the cries of the mentally ill, our hearts opened to forgiving our enemies? Will Jesus and his Spirit be startling you and I this week, surprising us with a love for our neighbors that is far bigger than we can imagine? Or will we be opposing him to protect the god we have fashioned for ourselves, a god that favors us and our nation and our way of living?

Once Pharisees opposed Jesus in order to protect the god they had fashioned for themselves. Religious leaders even got rid of him by putting him in a tomb. But God and a once blind man had the last word.

Jesus is alive and on the loose. Amen.