

Recently, I had a moment that made me think about this Gospel story in a new way.

I was sitting with my mom in the hospital. She was sleeping peacefully, and I had my laptop open, working on the Taizé Tenebrae service for Holy Week. It felt like a quiet, steady thing to do while sitting there beside her.

Someone who cares about me walked into the room and said rather casually, “You know, you’re kind of stubborn. You never stop working.”

Now I did what any spiritually mature person would do. I immediately resisted the label.

I thought (Well, I actually said), “*I’m not stubborn.*”

I’m just someone whose brain relaxes by working on something meaningful. Some people meditate.

Apparently, I write Tenebrae services.

But the comment stayed with me, as comments do. Not because I suddenly thought they were completely right, but because sometimes when someone holds up a mirror, even an imperfect one, it makes you pause. It makes you wonder what you might not be seeing about yourself.

Once that question appears, something interesting happens. We start to see things. And seeing can feel risky. Because once we see something about ourselves, we cannot quite go back to the comfort of not noticing it.

Which brings us to today’s Gospel.

At first glance, the story seems simple enough. Jesus heals a man who has been blind from birth. He makes mud with the dust of the earth, places it on the man’s eyes, and sends him to wash in the pool of Siloam. Suddenly, a man who has never seen the world before opens his eyes.

Can you imagine that moment? Suddenly, there is light. Color. Faces. Movement. The world appears all at once.

We might expect the story to end there with amazement and celebration, especially with his family and neighbors.

Instead, the rest of the chapter is filled with arguments.

The neighbors argue about whether this is really the same man. The religious leaders investigate the healing. His parents are questioned. The man himself is interrogated again and again.

Slowly, something surprising becomes clear. The only person who can actually see clearly in this story is the man who used to be blind.

Everyone else is struggling.

The disciples are looking for someone to blame for the man's condition. The neighbors can't quite believe what they are witnessing. And the Pharisees are certain that Jesus must be wrong because the healing took place on the Sabbath.

Everyone thinks they see clearly except the man who spent his whole life in darkness.

But something begins to happen to him. His understanding grows.

At first, he simply says, *"The man called Jesus healed me."*

Later, he says, *"He must be a prophet."*

By the end of the story, when Jesus finds him again, he says the most important words of all. *"Lord, I believe."*

His sight deepens. Not just physical sight, but spiritual sight.

Rachel Held Evans once wrote, *"Faith is not so much about certainty as it is about courage."*

Maybe that is what we see in the man born blind. Not perfect understanding, not a neat explanation for everything that has happened, but the courage and openness to keep seeing more clearly.

And here is the interesting part. The clearer he sees, the more trouble he gets into.

There is actually a moment in the story when he becomes almost bold with the religious leaders. They keep questioning him again and again about what happened, and finally, he says something that sounds almost playful.

*"Why do you keep asking me? Do you want to become his disciples too?"*

OMG, that does not go over well. Eventually, they throw him out of the synagogue. Seeing more clearly has gotten him into trouble.

But maybe that is the point of the Gospel. Because when people begin to see clearly, things change. When people begin to see clearly, injustice becomes harder to ignore. When people begin to see clearly, the world does not stay quite as comfortable as it was before.

The late civil rights leader John Lewis used to say, *"Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble."*

Sometimes the light of Christ leads us into that kind of trouble..... If we are lucky.

Not trouble for the sake of conflict, but trouble that comes from telling the truth. Trouble that comes from seeing clearly. Trouble that comes from following Jesus.

And I think this is where Paul speaks right into the story today.

He writes to the church in Ephesus,

*“Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light.”*

And, this..

*“Everything exposed by the light becomes visible.”*

Light reveals things. Light shows what has been hidden. Light exposes the dust we did not realize had gathered.

And I know that spiritually, it can feel uncomfortable. Because when Christ shines light into our lives, we begin to notice things. Places where we have been impatient. Places where we have been afraid. Places where we have avoided seeing a difficult truth. Places where we have trusted our own certainty more than God’s grace.

Seeing can feel like bad news. But the Gospel tells us something different. Seeing is actually the beginning of freedom.

One of the remarkable things about healing that we see with Jesus is that the turning point almost always begins the same way. In one way or another, he opens eyes and hearts.

Something extraordinary happens when people stop pretending they see clearly and begin telling the truth about what is actually going on. Healing begins. Not because they suddenly become perfect, but because honesty opens the door to grace.

I sometimes think the man born blind in this Gospel has an advantage. He knows what it means not to see. He knows what it means to depend on someone else.

When the light comes, he receives it.

The people who struggle the most in this story are the ones who are convinced they already see just fine.

Near the end of the story, Jesus finds himself with the man again. I love this detail because the man has just been thrown out of the synagogue. Rejected once again. Cast aside because he dared to speak a truth that they could not hear.

When Jesus learns of this, he goes looking for him.

When Jesus asks if he believes in the Son of Man, the man responds with beautiful honesty.

*“Who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe.”*

Jesus says, *“You have seen him.”*

The man replies, *“Lord, I believe.”*

Seeing leads to faith. Not the kind of faith that says, "Now I understand everything." The kind of faith that says I trust the one who opened my eyes.

So maybe the real miracle in this story is not simply that a blind man receives sight. Maybe the real miracle is that someone is willing to admit he did not see in the first place. Because that is where grace begins.

When we stop pretending, we can begin to see clearly. When we allow Christ to shine light into the places we might rather leave in shadow. When we become willing, like the man in the story, to say, "*Lord, I believe. Help me see.*"

Slowly and gently, the light of Christ does what light always does.

It reveals.....It heals.

And sometimes it even leads us into a little good trouble.

But always, always, it leads us toward freedom.

Amen.