

Hayward United Methodist Church

Pastor Samuel's Message for Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost, August 22, 2021

"I Am the Light of the World"

Text: John 9:1-12

Gospel Reading: John 9:1-7 (NRSV)

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

Prayer for Illumination (UMH 6)

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

There are three things that stand out in this story of healing a man born blind. The first one is suffering. The man suffers since his birth. He is not able to see. He is born with blindness. Second, Jesus comes as the light of the world. But he cautions that light should be beheld while it is still available. He predicts that night is coming and no one will be able to catch the light. Third, Jesus brings healing and the man born blind is able to see. Jesus heals incurable suffering. He eliminates suffering that has been there since birth.

John records only selective miracle stories. Some of the stories are not found in other Gospels. John weaves each story into discourse. John chapter 9 explains the healing of a man born blind in several segments and it ultimately points to Jesus as the light of the world. John uses this story to teach the importance of Jesus's coming into the world. Jesus is revealed as the light of the world in the midst of

darkness. Darkness is still there. But darkness does not overtake the light. Those who come to believe in Jesus come to possess the light. Those who don't come to Jesus still remain in darkness. The paradox still exists in the world. Jesus cautions that the light will not remain for a long time. It has to be possessed while it is still available.

First, the disciples ask Jesus a question about suffering. They wanted to know the reason for suffering. The disciples said, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man was or his parents that he was born blind?" (Jn 9:2). They wanted to know the cause for suffering. As Jesus healed many who were sick, the disciples asked an existential question. People do suffer everyday. People do get sick for various reasons and sometime since birth. What is the root cause for suffering. Sometimes innocent people suffer apparently for no reason. It simply happens. People become ill and suddenly lose their lives. Innocent people are caught up in conflicts, wars, pandemic, and struggles. The disciples are not blaming anyone here. But they want to find out the cause for suffering so that they could help the people. Is not the doctors and nurses do every day with patients so that they could better treat the patients with right medication?

Did not Job who was innocent suffer in the Old Testament? The whole book of Job deals with the question of suffering. The readers know how Job suffered. But Job didn't know anything about the reason for suffering. Suddenly he lost everything. He even lost his health. Job had a positive attitude toward suffering. He didn't dig into why question. He simply said, "Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?" (Job 2:10). Job knew that everything come from God, whether good or bad. There must be a cause behind it. But he was not interested in knowing it. He depends on God for everything. He is certain that God will have a purpose in sending good or bad things.

There is a mystery behind suffering. It is not an easy question to answer. Jesus echoed God's purpose here. Humans can sit and calculate and come up thousands of answers. But no single answer can satisfactorily answer the question of suffering. Sometimes we should differ it to God. That is what exactly Jesus did. Jesus responded to the disciples' question with grace and understanding. He said, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him" (Jn 9:3). Jesus wanted everyone to experience the mighty works of God. Whoever came to him, Jesus healed without asking any

question. He knew he came to serve the suffering humanity. Since the time of Adam people continue to suffer. Time has come for the man born blind to know the works of God. Jesus came to do the works of God. Jesus is going to reveal the works of God by healing this man born blind. If he were not born blind, he would not have never known the works of God. He would not have believed in Jesus as the light of the world. God's used his blindness to know God. The psalmist says, "It is good for me that I was humbled (afflicted), so that I might learn your statutes" (Ps 119:71). The psalmist suffered apparently for no reason. But the psalmist encountered suffering for the sake of God so that the psalmist might learn the law of God. What a way to look at suffering? We can learn the works of God in our suffering.

Second, Jesus reveals himself as the Light of the World. Even before Jesus heals and brings light to the man born blind, Jesus shows that he is the light of the world. Earlier in the prologue John points out the existence of darkness. The very purpose of Jesus's coming into the world is to dispel darkness. Jesus brought light which was the light of all people (Jn 1:4). Light and darkness coexist in the world. Light continues to dispel darkness. But darkness has not completely disappeared. If people chose darkness over light, then darkness still remains. Because of Jesus's coming there is a choice. Now is the time to choose between light and darkness.

Jesus continues to make the offer. He said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (Jn 8:12). What does Jesus mean? Jesus makes himself available to light up our lives. But Jesus does not force us to make the decision. It is up to us to make the choice. Because God has given us freedom to choose either light or darkness. Until we choose light we never know how life in the light of the Son of God will look like. We may think that we are in light. But Jesus says that we are actually in darkness if we have not decided to openly follow him.

The prophet Isaiah prophesied about the coming of light. He said, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined" (Isa 9:2). But it applies only to those who have come to believe in Jesus. Not everyone has seen the light. It is a matter of choice. Jesus makes it clear that light is available only for a limited time. There is time coming when people may search for light but they may not find it. The door of mercy will be closed. Jesus urges us to make a decision right now, not later.

Third, Jesus comes to heal the man born blind. Jesus demonstrates that he is the light of the world by healing the man born blind. He applies mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which means Sent)" (Jn 9:7). The man obeyed and washed in the pool of Siloam and came back seeing. He got his physical eye sight back which he lost since his birth. Not that the pool of Siloam had any magic power that brought him healing. Siloam meant "Sent." Jesus is the one who was sent by God. In other words, the man got healed in Jesus. Jesus's very life brought him the light. Jesus's very presence lights up the life of people.

Jesus said, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you" (Jn 12:35). Jesus issues an invitation. The invitation is to walk in the light while it is still available. If the invitation is turned down, then there will be darkness which will over take human lives. Jesus gives us the opportunity to come to him. At the same time Jesus predicts that darkness is fast approaching.

Do you want to live your life in light? Do you want Jesus to heal you and bring you to light? What are you waiting for? Now is the time to make the choice before it is too late. Jesus is waiting for you to make the decision and come to him so that he will send you to the pool of Siloam to be healed. Jesus said, "I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness" (Jn 12:46).

God Bless.

Pastor Samuel

Let's say the Benediction together:
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with us all. Amen.