

HEAD OF CHRISTIANA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH    NEWARK, DE  
October 27, 2013

Sermon preached by Bob Undercuffler

“WHY?”

John 9:1-41

I wonder -- WHY?

This man standing before us this morning is blind.

WHY?

AND WHY WOULD ANYONE BE BORN BLIND?

Here is one theory. This man sinned.

Or was it his parents who sinned?

Think about it for a moment –

According to the scripture ... he was born blind ...                    ...  
so could he have sinned in his mother’s womb?

Ah -- we are analyzing now – perhaps his blindness is a  
consequence of original sin?

So let’s think about theories of original sin for a moment or  
two -- or for a lifetime.

Let’s reflect on the Bible verses that undergird  
theories of original sin.

Let’s compare them.

And let’s argue them...

... And then -- “Jesus. Rabbi -- teacher!

Who sinned? This man -- or his parents?

And Jesus replies -- “Don’t be looking for someone to blame.

There is no cause and effect here.

Look ...witness what God can do.

Jesus goes on --“As long as I am in the world,  
there is plenty of light. I am the world’s light.”

Jesus then spits in the dust, makes a clay paste, rubs the paste on the  
blind man’s eyes, and instructs, “Go wash in the pool of Siloam.”

The man goes and washes -- AND HE SEES.

AND SOON THE WHOLE TOWN IS BUZZING.

Now, it's difficult to even imagine what happens for the next 30 verses?

First it's the newly sighted man who tries to make it clear to relatives and neighbors...

people who knew him year after year as "the blind man".

Some said, "No, this is not the same man at all.

"Yes it is."

"No, it just looks like him."

And the newly sighted man clears it up -- "It's me.

"I'm the one. "The very one."

"Impossible. How did your eyes get opened?"

(I wonder -- who are the truly blind in this story?)

"A man named Jesus made a paste and rubbed it on my eyes and told me to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash.

"I did as he instructed. When I washed, I saw."

"Where is this Jesus?"

"I don't know."

But that's the way it goes when God works -- ,  
When love reaches and embraces. And we see.

Then the friends and neighbors march the newly sighted man to the Pharisees. (now this is going to be a hard sell)

The Pharisees interrogate the man and he repeats his story.

"A man named Jesus made a paste and rubbed it on my eyes and told me to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash. I did what he said. When I washed, I saw.

Uh oh ... One big problem! It was the Sabbath!

No work to be done on the Sabbath!

So no mighty healings on the Sabbath.

**“The person who did this to you obviously could not have been from God for he does not keep the Sabbath.” So say the religious leaders.**

**But some of the Pharisees wonder --**

**“How can a bad man do extraordinary ...God-revealing things”**

**So we read, “There was a split in the ranks of the Pharisees.”  
(Again, I wonder -- who are the truly blind in this story?)**

**Next the Pharisees search-out and interrogate the man’s parents.**

**With the parents they take a new approach --**

**“We don’t believe your son was blind to begin with. “Is this truly your son?”**

**And before the parents can answer ... in frustration the inquirers blurt...  
... “How is it that you son now sees?”**

**The parents respond -- “Yes, this is our son, and we know that he was born blind.” And we haven’t a clue who opened his eyes.**

**“Why don’t you ask him? “He’s a grown man.”**

**Now these religious leaders -- these people who have God and God’s ways all figured out -- they went to this newly sighted man and said ...**

**“Give all credit to God.**

**We know that the man who gave you sight is an imposter.”**

**“I know nothing about that one way or another. But I know one thing for sure: I WAS BLIND. NOW I SEE.”**

**“What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”**

**“I’ve told you over and over and you haven’t listened. Why do you want to hear it again? “Are you so eager to become his disciples?”**

**And they jumped all over him.**

**“We are disciples of Moses. We know for certain that God spoke to Moses, but we have no idea where this man that you claim healed you even comes from? (Again, I wonder -- who are the truly blind in this story?)**

**The man-born-blind -- now seeing clearly affirms --**

**“THE FACT IS, HE OPENED MY EYES.”**

God listens carefully to anyone who lives in reverence and does his will.

**“IF THIS MAN DIDN’T COME FROM GOD, HE WOULDN’T BE ABLE TO DO ANYTHING!”**

And those religious leaders said, “You are nothing but dirt!” ...And they threw the man out into the street.

**HAVE YOU EVER BEEN THROWN OUT IN THE STREET**-- Fingers pointed in scorn -- Some wonder -- “Did she sin -- “Did he sin -- “Or was it your parents?”

**THROWN OUT IN THE STREET** -- Because you didn’t live-up to someone’s expectations -- or perhaps it’s even the expectations you have of yourself -- and you feel unaccepted and unacceptable.

**THROWN OUT IN THE STREET** -- Because you keep taking stands for justice. Because you’re a peacemaker. **OUT IN THE STREET** Because you challenge the status quo. You work for better -- for more inclusive ways.

**THROWN OUT THERE INTO THE STREET** --Because you are divorced -- or separating -- or failed at a job -- or were laid-off. Ah, some out on the street because the mortgage cannot be paid – or you’ve fallen behind on the rent -- and you must feed the children, too.

**SOMETIMES IT FEELS LIKE BEING OUT THERE IN THE STREET** -- When you are feeling too old -- have suffered too many losses --or the doctor firmly reports, “There is no more we can do.”

**Now** the time for questioning and analyzing and probing and evaluating is past.

But be thankful that Jesus is out there on the street. Jesus finds the healed one ...

“Do you believe in the Son of Man?” Jesus asks.

“Point him out to me sir, so that I can believe in him.”

You are looking right at him, Jesus said. Don’t you recognize my voice?”

“Master, I believe,” the man said -- and worshipped Jesus.

Here is what I’m thinking. No -- **Here is what I know.**

We need not align ourselves with those religious leaders -- questioning, judging -- trying to punch holes in your faith-experience or holes in the faith-experience of others.

Rather, There are other choices. We can align ourselves with those on the outside. Those who have been thrown-out. Disenfranchized. Discouraged. Discombobulated.

That's a good place to be, really, for there we can be met -- can be touched by Jesus -- whose touch -- whose word -- whose friendship brings healing.

And we can align ourselves with Jesus -- for we are the body of Christ. The way Christ is alive today is in and through his body. In and through folks like you and me who claim his name and his way.

Actually, as we consider our own lives, we may see ourselves as moving around all three. Among religious leader/Pharisee (by the way, Pharisee means 'one who is separated') And then too we may find ourselves as being out on the street -- thrown out on the street. Lonely. Alone.

But then we are touched by another -- by others -- by a community of the faithful and we are drawn home. And too, we discover the power of love that flows from us -- to others -- that we, also, are truly the body of Christ.

The challenge to the church.

The challenge to members of Head of Christiana Presbyterian Church -- is to move beyond Pharisee/separated one/religiously judgmental, dogmatic ...That's ok -- we can tarry there for a very temporary moment. Certainly there is some comfort there. Especially for those who maintain control.

But a lively church --

a living church --

a faithful congregation lives out there on the streets and roads.

At the intersection of Church Road and Rt. 273 --  
on campus and among students,  
administrators, faculty and beyond.

Among workers and retired ... even those retired and still working.

That's where we are met and welcomed and embraced by Jesus. And where we are indeed the body of Christ. And where it makes all the difference for our church --

and for our community. For our world.

**FOR OUR FUTURE.**

