

Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 26, 2017

John 9: 1-41 Reflection

The closer we get to Good Friday, the more we see the Pharisees looking constantly for reasons to arrest Jesus. Today's Gospel is no different. And it is a recurring theme with them, Jesus healing on the Sabbath.

On the surface, this passage appears to be about Jesus healing a man who has been blind from birth. The Pharisees first try to disprove that the man was blind from birth. When that doesn't work, they try to force the man to admit that Jesus must be a sinner because he does not honor the Sabbath.

But the real point is that Jesus uses this simple man to teach the Pharisees (and us) a lesson about who God really is. We know the Pharisees don't want to hear that because they have their own agenda. They question him repeatedly about how he regained his sight, trying to insert their version into his mind and his mouth, but he will not be swayed. "How can a sinful man do such signs?" He is steadfast in his belief that only a man of God could have done this. Are we that steadfast in defending our belief in God when put to the test? Do we stand up for God when confronted from all sides by non-believers?

When the man is pushed even harder to admit that Jesus must be a sinner, he continues his resistance with more pronouncements. Would we continue our steadfastness when being badgered as this man was? He sees through their attempts to discredit Jesus and when they say "we do not know where this one is from", he lays it out for them (and us). "It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do anything." And they threw him out.

We, too often, get comfortable "sitting on the fence" when it comes to our faith. Is it really a big deal if I eat meat on Friday? Oh, I really need to do such-and-such on the weekend, so I may skip Mass. God will forgive me. The truth is that God will forgive us if it is truly a necessity. But we convince ourselves that it really isn't that big of a deal and it becomes a habit. We are not perfect and God has allowed for that. It is when we take advantage of His forgiveness that we can become like the Pharisees.

Jesus told the once-blind man that He came into this world "so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind." Jesus told His disciples right at the beginning of the passage that this man was born blind "so that the works of God might be made visible through him." God uses saints and sinners, the educated and uneducated, the wealthy and the poor to teach us all. I was recently told, when stating my inadequacy, that God does not call the qualified, He qualifies the called.

During this Lent, let us be like that blind man in believing, even though we can't see and when we are shown the way, to follow it steadfastly, defending our faith whenever it is challenged, not backing down. He told us that following Him would not be the easy road, but the rewards would be great for those who do.

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