

## The Eyes of Jesus - John 9:1-41

### Slide: Kyle's confirmation

I have a godson who is such an amazing treasure. His name is Kyle. Kyle was born with Down's Syndrome. When he was born, I got to hold him on that first day as he slightly struggled. It was so difficult to see the little oxygen tubes in his nose, knowing that he had a hole in his heart, a common trait in one who has the syndrome. He was fortunate that the hole in his heart naturally healed as sometimes they can. This spring, Kyle is graduating from high school. He plays the cello beautifully. He loves Star Wars more than anything. And he loves Jesus heart and soul. Kyle has been such a wonderful reminder that typical development or neurotypical development is not something we can classify as the only form of normalcy, even though we may try to do so. Knowing Kyle, no one could deny how his kind and fun-loving disposition would be atypical.

Let's look at this phrase about blindness in the New Testament today and turn it on its head: "Jesus, did Kyle have Down's syndrome because of his sin or his parent's sin? Neither, Jesus says, but only so that the glory of God may be revealed through him." God's love is most definitely revealed through Kyle, even though he happens to have an extra chromosome.

### Slide: I was blind

I once ministered to a woman who had cancer, although I wonder now if she ministered to me instead. She had had a double mastectomy and was going through her third round of chemotherapy. The first kind didn't take, but they finally found a drug that was working.

One day this woman (name removed) said that although she hated the fact that she had cancer, she was finding to be an opportunity to talk to others about how Christ helps her through

difficulty. She found a way to see God's love while sitting their having chemo with others going through similar tough times. She did not believe God gave her the cancer, but she did believe that God's glory was revealed through the situation for her and the sake of others. Of course, it would be better if there were no suffering, but if she was, she felt Christ with her, healing her, giving her strength and walking alongside her. That's an amazing testimony!

"Jesus, did this woman have cancer because of her sin or her parent's sin? Neither, Jesus says, but only so that the glory of God may be revealed through her."

There was a man who was blind from birth. Everything has now changed for him. In the ancient world, a blind man would never had been able to hold a profession, as anything considered atypical at the time would have been considered a cause of sin, either his or his parents. This is why we have the question posited to Jesus in this Gospel reading for today. Physical manifestations of disease were considered to occur because of human sin. Imagine regaining his sight in such a world where the blind can only be beggars.

"Jesus, was this man born blind because of his sin or his parent's sin? Neither, Jesus says, but only so that the glory of God may be revealed through him." Notice that Jesus doesn't say why he is blind, nor does he answer the question of human suffering. This week at Burt Tulkki's funeral, I would have loved to have that question answered, but see here that God doesn't give us the easy answers to suffering, not even Jesus does. But, he sees an opportunity to remind us what suffering from a disease is not - it's not something that is our fault. But, he also sees an opening to show the metaphor of blindness, the kind that causes suffering in other ways. That kind of blindness is because of our sin.

Jesus sees our spiritual blindness and invites us to open our eyes with all our wounds and brokenness, or whatever keeps us from really seeing God's glory being revealed through us. In our blindness, we cannot see that Jesus uses our weaknesses for grace.

When tragedy strikes us, we often ask, why? “Why did this happen to me God? What did I do to deserve this? Is it me or is it my parents to blame?” “Neither”, Jesus says.

I’m going to teach yet another Greek word today! The word used that means to reveal or make manifest is *phaneroo*. It is the word Jesus uses to describe how God will reveal glory through the blind man. God’s glory is revealed or made manifest.

The word can also mean to be seen, to be made visible. For those of you who are interested in languages, the root of the word *phaneroo* “phan” is also the root of the word’s theophany or epiphany, these words mean having a sudden vision or recognition of God. Therefore, if our humanity is purposefully made to manifest or show God’s glory, then our reason for being is also to make Christ manifest...which reminds me of a hymn we normally sing during the season of Epiphany, not Lent:

*Songs of Thankfulness and Praise, Jesus, Lord, to Thee we raise.  
Anthems be to Thee addressed, God in flesh made manifest.*

The word *phaneroo*, manifest, to be seen - we are as the people of God to manifest or reveal Jesus in all we are and do. When we suffer, let us reveal the glory of God, when we are healthy, let us reveal the glory of God, when we are in tragedy, affliction, or difficulty, let us reveal the glory of God. Let us make God manifest in all we are. Let us “see” through the eyes of Jesus, God made manifest in the world.

But do we see Jesus through the eyes of the Pharisees or through the eyes of Jesus. It’s easy to reflect and make visible Jesus Christ on a Sunday morning because worship always reveals the glory of God. It’s quite another thing to manifest Jesus when your feet are sore, the kids need to get their homework done, the money is gone, the marriage in difficulty. But, like Jesus, that is exactly where we do and can reveal God to others and see God in others.

We look and see God in the homeless. We see God in the hospital bed and at the end of a life. We see God revealed and made manifest in the poor, in the mentally ill, and in the children, because that is with whom Jesus spent most of his time when he was with us – those who needed healing, the lost, the marginalized.

In this story from today, Jesus shows God revealed through a blind person rather than the spiritually blind Pharisees. Jesus is playing with this idea of blindness. As the blind man is able to see who Jesus is, the Pharisees are not able to see who Jesus is even though they are not physically blind.

There is an upside-down, topsy-turvy chain of events here with the sighted that are blind and the blind that see. And we are meant to take a serious look hearing this story, how it is we are blind and even to point out spiritual blindness when we see it happening in the world. Are we blind **or** do we make manifest the very Christ we proclaim.

The man who is blind in the Gospel lesson was given the eyes of Jesus. He was given Jesus' eyes. How can we have Jesus' eyes? The first step is to recognize that we are sometimes blind like the Pharisees, that we often do not see where it is that God's glory is revealed, within others and within ourselves. Jesus wants us to see. Jesus waits for us to see, knowing fully that it is not our sin, nor the sin of our parents, but that Jesus is ready to reveal the Glory of God in us.

The man who was blind was given Jesus eyes to see. When we truly see, we are given new eyes, new insight, and new vision of the world. With Jesus eyes, we stop seeing the world through our prejudices. We stop seeing the homeless person as a nuisance. We stop seeing that which threatens us as dangerous. We stop treating each other with suspicion and we listen.

Yet having Jesus eyes can be unwelcome by others. Jesus Eyes are often seen as world shattering. And there is a cost to having the

vision of Jesus. That cost always brings the cross nearby. The cross is the central point by which we begin to truly see the needs of the world and God's hidden yet revealed place upon it.

What needs to be turned topsy-turvy in your world? How do you need to see? How are you blind? Where is your brokenness so that God's glory may be shown, made manifest and revealed? How can your weakness be seen as holy? And how can you see what is holy around you in this broken world? May we all pray for this today, that as we meet each person this week, we may be able to see them with the eyes of Jesus.

Please pray with me: Lord, Christ, we often look around this world through our own eyes, our own world views, our own priorities rather than through the eyes of you. Help us to see truly where you are made manifest in the world, and where we refuse to see you, locked by our own fears, doctrines, and traditions, make us to have new vision...a vision that is yours. Amen.