

“Who Do You Say I Am?”

March 26, 2017
John 9: 1-38 NIV

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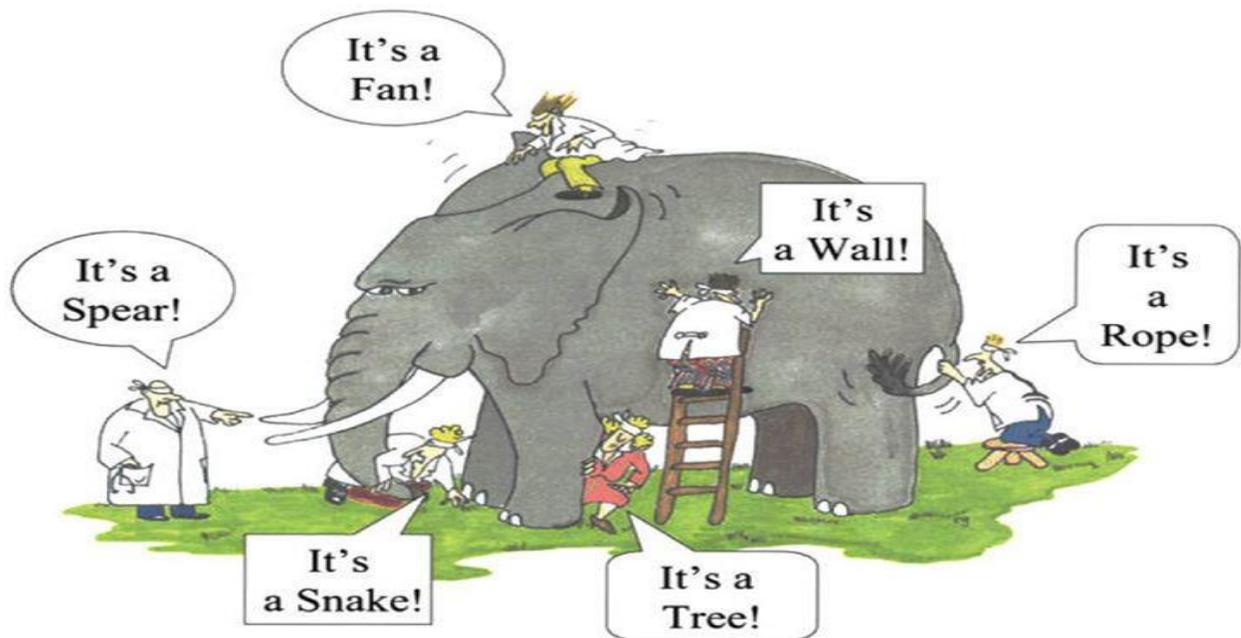
Welcome to the third Sunday in Lent -- a time when some of you may be experiencing some sort of withdrawal symptoms as you have decided to give up something for Lent and replace it with time to think about how you deepen your relationship with Christ. Or like me, perhaps you've become more committed to something for Lent in order to focus on hearing God's voice.

For others, you may not even know what Lent is and that's okay because it is still a special Sunday...the first Sunday in Spring! As we look outside, it is somehow hard to believe Spring is here. In fact when I saw the freezing rain warning last night I wondered if we'd even make it here! 😊 But I do believe Spring is in the air, as I have seen robins in my yard, and geese returning overhead. There are new things growing and being transformed all around me.

As Lent, the 40 days leading up to Easter began, the linens on the altar table were changed to Purple; signifying a Holy season.

Pastor Kim challenged us to not be afraid of the wilderness, or times we may feel God is distant or has abandoned us, but to remember that God is with us in those times of feeling alone and lost. She also challenged us to see Jesus in those times that we are feeling like we are in a wilderness. But how do we see Jesus? What or who is Jesus to each of us? Do we have a Jesus story to tell? It is often said that how we see things is all a matter of perspective. What has shaped your perspective?

Take a look at this illustration. We can see the big picture and know this is an elephant, but each person here, being either blind or blindfolded, has a limited view of what is really before them.



I think the same is true of how we view Jesus.

In the scripture that was read this morning there are 4 different responses to who Jesus is. I want to look at those responses, and then, as we are in the season of Lent, I want to quickly examine others who had a parallel story to today's scripture reading. These are the people that surrounded Jesus during his last week on Earth.

Shirley Avery who is one of our amazing children's workers often concludes a story by saying... "I wonder...?" "I wonder who?" I wonder...this is a great question as it puts us into the story, and so I encourage you to ask yourself "I wonder who in this story I would be? I wonder why I would be like them. Perhaps like me you are able to identify with a number of the characters represented, but today, living in the present, I wonder who do I see Jesus to be?"

Let's take a look at the story. It was a normal day for Jesus He was walking along, hanging out with his disciples, perhaps chatting about everyday things, perhaps focusing on the work that needed to be done, or perhaps talking about deep theological truths.

Shortly after Jesus says; "As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Then they spot a man. I've decided to give him a name: Darsha, who was born blind. No one brought him to Jesus; he did not call out to Jesus. Jesus simply observed him and reached out to him.

Now, I could launch into a theological discussion on the implication of this action, and ask does God seek us out, or do we have to seek God out, or other complex possibilities – but I believe the greater underlying truth for us is that *Jesus wants to act in our lives. Jesus loves us so much, that when we meet Him, he is not willing to leave us the way he found us.* And interacting with Darsha, Jesus spits on the ground, picks up the muddy paste and places it on Darsha, telling the man who has been blind since birth to go wash in the pool, and he goes --- in obedience and returns, now able to see! I wonder – what is your reaction to this story?

It is at this point we see the first response of those around him as to what has happened. The Message Bible translation puts it this way in vs 8 - 10: *“Soon the town was buzzing. His relatives and those who year after year had seen him as a blind man begging were saying, “Why, isn’t this the man we knew, who sat here and begged?” Others said, “It’s him all right!” But others objected, “It’s not the same man at all. It just looks like him.” He said, “It’s me, the very one.” They said, “How did your eyes get opened?” “A man named Jesus made a paste and rubbed it on my eyes and told me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ I did what he said. When I washed, I saw.” “So where is he?”*

They were skeptical – questioning whether or not this man was truly blind and now healed. Surprise and skepticism prevailed in their questioning. Have you ever questioned whether or not God has really been at work – or do we just chalk it up to some other explanation or point of logic?

Last week I took a couple days with my boys and headed to Quebec for a time of dog sledding and other winter adventures. I had used my phone quite a bit at first to take pictures etc. but somewhere along the trail it must have fallen out of a pocket, as I soon realized it was nowhere to be found. There were good things and bad things about not having my phone. I worried about losing contacts but on the positive side was less distracted and able to focus on the good times with my boys. I decided to not let it ruin my vacation but I still asked God to return it to me if at all possible. I was hoping for a miracle.

Three days later I was contacted by the person who just by chance found my phone on the trail. And when it was plugged in to recharge, found that it actually still worked. A miracle in itself.

Was it God looking after me – reassuring me – or was it just coincidence? Is it coincidence that my current job ended for me this past Friday and I already (by Sunday) have a new job offer on the table and

leads on another couple of options? I believe this is God telling me that He has my back!

The second response was that of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the most vocal and influential religious leaders at the time: leaders who had read scripture that pointed to a Messiah that would bring sight to the blind. "In that day shall the eyes of the blind see out of obscurity" ([Isaiah 29:18](#)). So why did these men deny what was happening before them?

"The Pharisees perhaps meant to obey God, but eventually they became so devoted and extremist in very limited parts of The Law (plus all that they themselves added to it), that they became blind to The Messiah when He was in their very midst. They saw His miracles, they heard His Words, but instead of receiving it with joy, they did all that they could to stop Him - - eventually to the point of getting Him killed because He claimed to be the Son of God." This group of men, who should have known Jesus would come to heal and to save – spoke in disbelief. Their hearts were hardened toward Jesus and threatened by what he would ask of them.

When have you responded to Jesus as the Pharisee's did -- with hardened hearts, ignoring the obvious healing and wholeness he longs to bring? I know when I respond with a hardened heart, I miss out. It makes things worse when I do not listen to the teachings of God.

The third group of responders were the parents of the blind man. As I parent, I struggle to understand the response of these two. Why did they not want to tell the world about the Source that healed their son? They were afraid of speaking the truth for fear of excommunication. Let's look at verse 20 – 22: it says "*We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself*". His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. "He is of age; ask him."

As I look back on my life, I can honestly say that there were times I reacted as these parents did. There have been times when I have kept quiet instead of admitting I know Jesus is able to heal out of fear of being disbelieved or kicked out of the locker room. There have been other times where I know people claim they have been healed, but I am not confident enough to admit that it could really be true. I wonder.....how many of you have ever denied the power of Christ to heal for fear of someone or something.

And finally (fourth), the central character of our story..... Darsha. Darsha has been blind since his birth. He has relied on his family, his friends and random strangers to provide for him as he was a beggar. His experience of life would have been limited, and no doubt he frequently hoped to be able to see what was happening around him so he could experience more.

Some of you may have suffered eye damage at one time or another and be able to relate just a little. I had such an experience this fall that reminded me just how precious eye sight is. Some of you know that I love playing hockey, I am not a great goalie, but I love to play. As a goalie, wearing glasses presents a bit of challenge, so I like to wear contacts in order to be able to see to play. Only this time in my hurry to get on the ice, I popped my contacts in, squirting what I thought was an all-purpose saline solution, only to be confused with a contact cleaning solution. And so, having my site blurred, even for a few moments I know what it is to have my vision reduced and it was a horrible feeling.

Are we sometimes blind to the possibilities of an encounter with Jesus? Darsha does what Jesus asks him to do. In obedience he goes to the water. How does he get there? Stumbling along – easing himself into the water – standing there with nothing happening, and then lifting water to his face in his hands – and then seeing himself in the waterseeing the world around him for the first time.... and when others question him as to how this has happened, he points to Jesus and as we see in verse 38 he says: *“Lord, I believe”* and he worshipped him.

Let’s fast forward a little bit – to the week before The Crucifixion. Like the neighbours, there were skeptics in the crowd and those who questioned the validity of Jesus. One of the men on the cross was a prime example. He said: "He can save others, but he can’t save himself." And like the Pharisees — we add to that hard-hearted mix Caiaphas, and Pontius Pilot, and all the soldiers who were threatened by the idea that Christ was the King of the Kingdom to come, — and like the parents – Peter – a disciple of Jesus – who Jesus predicted would deny Him, (you would have thought he would try to prove Jesus wrong) but in the end he did just that, for fear of being associated as a disciple of Christ.

But my favourite character, was one who interacted with Jesus on Palm Sunday and his name was Bartimeaus – who like Darsha was blind all his life. His story can be watched by following the following link:

<https://skitguys.com/videos/item/who-do-you-say-i-am>
or in this scripture account. Mark 10:46-52 (CEV)

“Jesus and his disciples went to Jericho. And as they were leaving, they were followed by a large crowd. A blind beggar by the name of Bartimaeus son of Timaeus was sitting beside the road. When he heard that it was Jesus from Nazareth, he shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!” Many people told the man to stop, but he shouted even louder, “Son of David, have pity on me!”

Jesus stopped and said, “Call him over!”

They called out to the blind man and said, “Don’t be afraid! Come on! He is calling for you.” The man threw off his coat as he jumped up and ran to Jesus.

Jesus asked, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man answered, “Master, I want to see!” Jesus told him, “You may go. Your eyes are healed because of your faith.” Right away the man could see, and he went down the road with Jesus.

My friends, we have seen the big picture – we know that although Christ was killed, we know that he rose from the dead and therefore longs to bring his healing power into our lives even today...to give us Hope in our times of wilderness.

My friends at Wall Street... my name is Laura. I am a journeying follower of Jesus. What is your story? Who do you say Jesus is? May you have the eyes to see it, and the courage to tell your story to others.