

For me, the Gospel in John 9 is one of the most seminal in the narration of Jesus' ministry and of his presence as God Incarnate on this earth because it speaks to the revelation of God in our lives as individuals, as family, as a community and to those to whom we have given authority in our lives. This scene would really make a good stage play, or even a movie;. There are a great cast of characters. Although he is the protagonist in the scene, Jesus makes cameo appearances at the beginning and at the end. The main actor is the blind man with not-so supporting roles played by his community and his parents. And, of course, the antagonists are the Pharisees who diminish in identity in John the Gospel writer's eyes from Pharisees to Jews to 'they'. The reason for this is another sermon, or an Adult Bible Study of the Gospel of John.

Jesus enters the scene with his disciples and tells us in almost an aside what this scene is about. He says, I am going to shine a light on the revelation of God's works through this blind man who has been deemed a sinner because of his blindness. There is sin, but the sin does not lie with him. So Jesus heals the blind man, revealing the authority that God has given him, and leaves the scene having seemingly created chaos with his healing. How could a wondrous act of God create chaos? The 'blind man's community is upset now that he is no longer blind. They want to know how is it now that he can see? You would think they would be rejoicing for the man, but they are confused. He used to beg from them, but now he can see and is able to participate more fully as a member of the community. Isn't this a cause for rejoicing? Apparently not because whoever healed him worked on the Sabbath to do so, John tells us, and the works, even though they are from God, cannot be seen by the community as having come from God. The rules they have placed between them and God prevents even works of God from being done on the Sabbath. Further, they don't know what to do with this man now that Jesus has taken away his 'sin' of having been born blind. The poor man doesn't even know what to do. He doesn't know where Jesus came from or where he went after healing him. But John gives a wonderful hint when Jesus sends the man to the pool called Sent to wash the mud off his eyes. Jesus was sent to heal, as was the man, unbeknownst to him, both revealing God. And, don't you love the mud as a metaphor for the chaos? Not only was the community blind to the revelation of God, but the mud was the healing light Jesus shined on them that they might see. But, they don't see, and so do what upstanding members of the community are supposed to do: they take the healed man to the religious authorities, and say 'you handle it'. We don't want to be tainted by the implications of work being done on the Sabbath. Further, what do we do with this man now that he can see? We knew how to keep him out of the community, but we don't know how to bring him in. This sounds more like our society than I wish it was. And, I am reminded of an exercise we did last weekend at the Happening on the meaning of being in and out of community. So they take the blind man who can now see to the Pharisees, the know-it-all, and say 'handle it, handle it.. You all make and keep the rules that govern our relationship with God. You tell us what we're supposed to do.'

And, of course, the Pharisees immediately get all hung up in Jesus having worked on the Sabbath. But, they must deal with this revelation of God that is in the healing of this man who can see. And, so they begin to accuse him, trying to make him the scapegoat for their lack of understanding, or lack of wanting to understand, how it could be that he sees. And, so they question him as if he was still the sinner the laws had deemed him to be as a person born blind. Oh, how many times is this done to those among us whom we don't understand? We start questioning them about their identity, instead of questioning ourselves about our lack of knowledge of who they are. This is the second time the blind man is answering questions about Jesus who healed him, and he is becoming more aware who Jesus might be. He told his community he didn't know, but being more aware with sight, he realizes that Jesus was probably a prophet, someone of stature of the Pharisees. The Pharisees don't want to hear this or deal with this, and seeing that the blind man isn't taking on the role of the scapegoat to their refusal to see the revelation of God in his seeing, they seek another scapegoat, his parents. For surely, if the former blind man's sins are not his responsibility, they must be the parents'. Even Jesus disciples thought this at the beginning of this scene.

So they go to the parents, and the parents, who are stuck in the mores of society, beg off. They 'know nothing, they see nothing, they hear nothing'. They don't want to be cast out of the community as they have apparently cast out their son who was begging on the street before Jesus came along. Yet, even as a healed person with sight they cannot claim him because even though his sight was given to him through an apparent act of God, that it was done on the Sabbath precludes them from rejoicing for their son's healing because they don't want to get thrown out of their community. Truth be told, we can understand the parents. They're only trying to do what they've lived into all their lives. They don't want to make any waves to the status quo. When their son was old enough, they apparently separated themselves from the sin of his blindness leaving him in the street to fend for himself. And, under the scrutiny by the authorities, they threw their son under the bus again. We don't have to answer for him. He's old enough. Go ask him about his healing.' Any of you who lived through the 'generation gap' era of this country in the 60s and 70s may have experienced this kind of reaction from your parents to your longer hair, the holes in your jeans, your liberal politics, hanging out with those 'Negroes'. My mother could not speak when I came home from prep school with an Afro. She swore I would never get a job. The women in my church castigated me because I didn't wear stockings in the summer anymore. I was no longer in community, creating chaos and they didn't know what to do with me. The Pharisees didn't know what to do with the revelation of God they were witnessing in the healed blind man. And, the blind man sees, he understands. He is seeing as God sees. Under the third set of questioning about his healing, he lectures to them about their now obvious refusal to recognize the works of God that are revealed in his healing. And they put him out because they don't want to face the challenge that Jesus has thrown at their feet which was upholding the community of God created by God's works, God's works are what gave them the Mosaic law from which they took the authority they exercised, but which they used to put people out of God's community instead of including them. In healing the blind man, Jesus shined a light on the healing that needed to take place in the community in order for it to be able to see his revelation of God's works.

Jesus knew he was causing trouble in healing the man, but I believe he so desperately wanted to reveal who God was because he knew the wonder of God's works that everyone was missing out on. He wanted the Pharisees to stop placing the law above creating God's community here on earth. He healed the blind man on the Sabbath to make the point that the healing which would bring the man back into community was more important than not working on the Sabbath. If upholding the law stood between the people and God, then the law had to be broken, otherwise as he told the Pharisees in the last verse, they remain in sin and kept everyone else in sin. In healing the blind man Jesus gave him the chance to experience the world with sight, and for his world to change with him. Yes, it was creating chaos, upending the status quo, but Jesus was directing his 1<sup>st</sup> century world and us toward God's restoration of our soul from the nourishment of green pastures and still waters. These are the works of God which Jesus wanted to reveal in his light. Even when his world was chaos around him, Jesus spread a table of community in front of the blind man, a table at which he would be nourished for the first time in his life. Jesus' healing of the man was his anointing, and his revelation of himself to him overflowed his cup. He was able to see and know who God was because he could see God through the goodness and mercy that Jesus had shown him.

This is what happens when we allow the chaos of seeing God's works take over the status quo of our lives. When we let go of the things that stand between us and God, things that may be foundational to our being. Imagine with me, if you will, laying in the soft grass of a pasture or sitting beside the calm of a smooth lake, allowing the wonder of God's works to lead you to all that you need, and believing that God's mercy and goodness can give you all you need all the days of your life. This is what Jesus gave the blind man when he healed him; and he offered the community, his parents and the Pharisees the same gift. And he offers it to us through his revelation of God's goodness in our lives. May we open our eyes and see it.