

One day Jesus saw a man blind from birth.

*His disciples asked, "Whose fault?"
Jesus said, focus instead on what God will do!*

*Jesus washed his eyes with mud and sent him to wash in the healing pool.
The man came back and he could see!*

*The neighbors asked what had happened to the blind beggar. "You can't be him!"
But he kept saying I AM.*

They asked "how?" and he said, "I don't know – I did as asked and can see!"

*Pharisees said, "Jesus is a lawbreaker – he couldn't have done this!"
The man said, "I think he is a prophet"*

*Neighbors called mom and dad – "how could this be?"
And they said, "We don't know – ask him!"*

*Again, they confronted the man. "Tell the truth, Jesus couldn't have done this, he is a sinner."
The man said, "I was blind and now I can see, that is all I know."*

*The religious leaders said, "We don't know anything about Jesus!" The man said, "you worry
about who he is and how he does what he does, all I know is he healed me!"*

The leaders cried out, "you are a sinner, don't talk to us! And they threw him out!"

*Jesus went and found him and asked, "Do you believe in the Messiah."
Man said, "Yes, let me see him so I can believe."
Jesus said I am he!*

One night in 8th grade my Dad found me standing at our living room window shouting at someone outside who wasn't there. I was sleepwalking. I was embarrassed. I have never figured out how we can see when asleep or walk when we are asleep.

What about you? How often have you driven a route you knew by heart, and suddenly realized you had travelled blocks or miles without even being aware? Like you were in a trance! How can we miss so much when we think we are awake?

Today's lessons asks us to examine our own lives of faith. Are we awake? Are we asleep? Are our eyes and hearts open, or are we missing what we should be seeing?

When Lazarus died, Mary and Martha assumed if "Jesus had arrived in time" he could have stopped death! They knew he loved Lazarus, why did he let that happen? They believed he was capable of anything, so why had he let this happen? How smart do we think we are and how often are we surprised by what appears to be impossible? The crowd gathered at the tomb of Lazarus had given up hope, and yet Jesus had not yet begun to act. How often are God's ways different than ours?

We see the same pattern throughout scripture. Joseph was left to die in a pit, only to become a powerful ruler in that same land. Moses had a speech impediment yet stood face to face with the most powerful ruler of Egypt. Samuel assumed David was too small to be “the one,” and yet he became the greatest king of all.

A priest wouldn't stop for a wounded Jew, but a Samaritan did. God came to earth not as a king in a palace, but a baby in a little town in Bethlehem. Rome thought Jesus had died on a cross, yet three days later the tomb was empty! Saul persecuted Christians and then became the greatest witness of Christ. Sometimes God's ways take time!

How often do we fail to see the wonder and mystery in life because we don't appreciate the ordinary? How often do we reject the good news because its music is not as obvious as a marching band? How often do we ignore love and beauty because it doesn't glare right in our face or make a lot of noise and demand a lot of attention?

It is so easy to judge a book by its cover or fail to see God at work in the beauty of a lily or the complexity of a tiny, one celled animal. The world looks for certain attributes judged to be signs of success, power and might, and the results are wars, failed economies, and leaders who can't figure out how to lead.

Do not miss the wonder because of the average. Do not let the miraculous skip you by because of the common. Subtlety and restraint are signs of good taste, and God has good taste. For God has put wonder in the ordinary. God's ways are not our ways.

Three different stories going on simultaneously (much like happens in our daily living). The first story was concerned with “whose fault is it that the man was blind! I don't believe he was really blind because no blind person can ever see.” And those people who had healthy eyes, were unable to see what was right before them.

The second surrounds parents who were so traumatized by the accusations of the “doubters” that they had the joy of their son's miracle stolen away! And the final story concerns the healing itself. First there was sight: then there was faith. Finally, he was fully healed! Finally, he saw AND believed! Faith is the miracle of healing.

Jesus' disciples had wondered only who was at fault. They had no compassion or concern. Jesus healed to proclaim God had come near. The neighbors argued that it couldn't have happened. They couldn't see what was right before them, but the blind man saw what no one else could embrace ... Jesus is God in the flesh!

Even the process of healing helps us to see what is easy to miss. First Jesus rubbed mud in his eyes, as he re-enacted Genesis 2. Mud was shaped into a form, and God breathed life into the first man. It is Jesus' love that revives and resuscitates lost lives!

Our response is what comes next. The man left his darkness behind and simply told what he could see. Ephesians 5:14 (another text for today) states “*Sleeper awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.*” What a great message this is as we think about how appearances can be deceiving. Even if eyes are open, without Christ there is no vision, no light, and no life. And yet when we open our eyes, we see Christ!

The man who was healed had to leave his darkness behind. The crowd struggled with their

need to control the facts and complained about the healing, blamed the parents, even suggested the man was maybe never blind. All that proves is that people can be so comfortable living in the darkness are like cave dwellers who are scared of the light. Unless one steps into the light, no matter how bright the sun might be, there is no way to see and no way the glow of the sun can reflect off your life.

Remember, God is always choosing the foolish and the weak things of the world to confound the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). Appearances can be deceiving.

Consider the example of the atom. The tremendous power which we fear in our world is not the flow of great rivers or the floods which they cause. It is not the might of the tide as it pushes the millions of tons of water forward and then draws them back again. It is not the flash of the lightning or the crack of the thunder. It is something so small that we cannot see it. It is the atom which we fear, and it is the atom which has the unlimited power to blow the world apart. What would seem to be the weakest thing in the world is in reality an unbelievably powerful force.

Who can imagine the power that gathers for worship on Sundays? Who can measure the work of God that is accomplished from week to week by people who feed on the meat and the milk of God's Word? And few people hear about it, or perhaps even care. But the work goes forward, and it gets done by ordinary people with an extraordinary

How often does illness seem insurmountable? And yet death has already been destroyed! Remember God's words to Samuel when looking for a king among the children of Jesse, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Remember how the world has been changed by a man who was judged to be ONLY the son of a carpenter ... and how the world thought that story had ended when he was sealed in a tomb. God loves YOU, and because you are loved, you are greater than King David and called to join Jesus in helping the light to shine.

Remember Bethlehem and a manger. Or the finality of the cross. Remember a sealed tomb that became empty. Isn't it wonderful that with God, appearances are always deceiving, and what seems controlled by darkness is always changed by the Light?

"Sleeper awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you!"