

Sisters and Brothers in Christ, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ AMEN.

This morning's passage from the Gospel of John is one of my touchstone passages and I could easily preach on this for an hour or more, so go grab some coffee and make yourselves comfortable....

There are any number of things we could concentrate on and pull out of this text, but they are all woven together under an over arching message from Christ that will, I hope, become clear as we dive in.

The first issue we deal with right off the off the bat is the issue of Sin. The disciples upon seeing a blind man are asking a question of causality. So they ask their questions "Who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" They do not have all the medical background that we now have, so they are seeking understanding from a framework that they know. This notion of causality is one that we are very comfortable with, and it is often helpful but Jesus dismisses the causality that the disciples are establishing and in so doing brings to light an important theme in the Gospel of John.

The disciples are seeking a specific reason, or sin if you will to attach the man's blindness too, which invites us to look at a very common definition of Sin; one that is moral in nature. It says in essence that Sin is made up of specific acts and actions. These can be identified and either avoided or remedied.

Christ and the Evangelist have a deeper understanding of Sin, Christ repudiates the notion of a specific sin as the cause for the blindness and opens the door to both a more profound understanding of exactly what Sin is, and a deep revelation God's Grace.

To say, as the disciples and many other do, that Sin is simply a matter of our actions and their consequences does a couple of things that can lead you down the rabbit hole to despair.

- I- You start focusing on cause and effect, and while there is no question that cause and effect comes in to play in many places in our lives; in others there is no real cause and effect, sometimes things just ARE what they are.
- II- Secondly and more importantly; To reduce sin to the arena of our actions and consequences, leads down a road that convinces us that we can do this on our own by finding and removing the actions that bring about the negative consequences and severely reduces the need for God's Grace and the salvation that Christ brings

Christ proposes an alternative understanding of Sin that avoids both of these pitfalls and gets more to the heart of the matter. For Christ, Sin is not merely a moral construct based on our actions, but a theological construct where Sin is that which stands between you and God; that which keeps you apart. This I think is a far deeper and more profound understanding of Sin, and it is this one that Christ has come to address.

Thus he is able to say to the Disciples that there is no sin that causes the man's blindness. Certainly this is an act of profound restoration for the man, and one

that he appreciates no doubt but as great as that miracle is; it pales in comparison to the recognition that this man has met God in the Flesh face to face. Emmanuel is with him in a profound way that moves beyond simple restoration of sight. His entire life has changed and he begins to understand who the person in front of him is and what that means.

As one touched by Grace, he is moved to proclamation; as one who has been transformed by Grace he is moved to witness and he consistently in the face of enormous pressure again and again speaks God's presence and transformation in his life.

This is in stark contrast to the Pharisees who cannot see what is in front of them because they are so caught up in the fact that this profound act took place outside of the Law. Their blindness remains. In many ways they are like that old saying and can't see the forest for the trees. They remain in their darkness; their blindness because they are unwilling, perhaps unable to conceive of God's Grace outside of their box.

This I think is where the challenge lies for you and me....God's love has been made manifest in Christ who is God in our midst. This Christ breaks into our midst and shines God's light on us, removing all those things that stand between us and God so that we may know God's love; acting sometimes in ways that we cannot understand to bring this about. We are invited and called...maybe even challenged to shape our lives to this incarnation of God's Grace that has come to make God known to us in profound ways.