**Sermon John 9 CCSV 2020 Lent 4**

 ***Before you read any further, please take out your Bible and read the whole of the 9th chapter of John.***

**This is one of the most vivid narratives in all the Gospels- a wonderful story of one man’s integrity and perseverance- against humanities’ propensity for self-protection and prejudice. There’s drama within an atmosphere of controversy, division and downright hostility. To help understand the story and its’ meaning, note these facts from Jewish history and tradition:**

**+++ according to Old Testament prophesy, giving sight to the blind will be a feature of the Messianic age**

**+++ the Jews believed that any defect at birth or sickness is divine punishment for sin**

**+++ they also believed that the sins of the parents would be inflicted on their children**

**+++ surprising to us, ‘Saliva’ was widely believed to have curative powers**

**There are two principal characters to the story…a beggar blind from birth and some Pharisees .In the role of miracle worker, Jesus initiates the drama, but does not appear again until the end. He’s walking along with his disciples and they pass a blind beggar, well known in the area. Asked by the disciples whose sin was responsible for his blindness, he or his parents, Jesus takes this as an opportunity to make the power and compassion of God real and clear, revealing himself as the channel for that power and compassion. Using saliva and soil, he anoints the eyes of the beggar and tells him to wash it off in a pool which is part of their water system. When he does, he can see ! Then as the story unfolds, we see the beggar challenged by a number of TESTS:**

**Test 1. He lets Jesus anoint his eyes, but he doesn’t have to.**

 ***Test Passed***

***My Test. When I know that Jesus wants me to follow a certain path, do I do it?***

**Test 2. Walking the long distance for a blind man is an arduous journey**

 ***Test Passed***

***My Test. When I know that doing the right thing will be difficult, perhaps painful, do I do it***

**Test 3. With his new sight, his neighbours say he’s a different man. He insists that he is the same man, except now he can see. When asked how, he says**

**“ The man Jesus”. Test Passed**

***My Test. When family and friends don’t agree with my commitment to Jesus, do I stand firm ?***

**Test 4. He tells the whole story to the Pharisees, who harass him. He says that Jesus was able to heal him because “He is a prophet”, a dangerous assertion because they have the power to expel him from the synagogue. He stands firm.**

 ***Test Passed***

***My Test. My boss wants me to do something which is immoral and against my Christian beliefs . What do I do?***

**Test 5. The Pharisees claim that the whole thing is a fraud put together by the man and Jesus. Again he stands form, impatient with them. They chase him away, expelling him from the synagogue**

 ***Test Passed***

***My Test. In a conversation, some people say that Jesus was just another really good man, nothing more. What do I say?***

**Test 6. Jesus hears about the harsh treatment of the man and seeks him out. Jesus helps him to faith. He kneels before him and calls him “Lord”.**

 ***Test Passed***

***My Test. Am I prepared, at all times and all places to confess my belief that Jesus is Lord?***

**We can’t help but be delighted at how one simple, formerly blind beggar, has responded to the belligerence and harassment of some fellow human beings; they**

**accused him of being born in sin; they ignored him by going to his parents, hoping to refute his claims; they overpowered him by throwing him out of the synagogue. But he was not to be bullied, not to be threatened. What happened to him was real – facts that can’t be denied- once he was blind, but now he can see -and Jesus made it happen. One man- with no previous knowledge of Jesus- on a journey of faith to belief in the Lord. *( I’m sure that has happened, or is still happening, to many of us )***

**But the journey from unbelief to belief is not an easy one….time after time he was faced with detours…..from his fears at losing his coveted location as a beggar, by his neighbours, by his parents, twice by the Pharisees….. we can follow that journey….from “Jesus is the man” -to “Jesus is a Prophet” -to “ Jesus is Lord”.**

**So often, our journey of faith is that like of the blind beggar. Year-by year…..month-by month…..day-by-day……Jesus touches my life,touches your life…….and as our personal life stories unfold, if we recognize it, our faith deepens, and the power and compassion of Jesus is revealed and released in our lives. The Blind beggar was given a NEW LIFE -because the Light of the World -Jesus- opened not only his eyes, but his heart, mind and spirit to the wonder and delight of feeling God’s love. That was the climax of this story for the ‘ all-seeing new man’.**

**This story is not complete unless we reflect on the other principal characters- the Pharisees- because they also are being tested:**

**Test 1. When the blind man was first brought before them, there was disagreement among them; some said it was God’s work, others said that a sinner can’t do God’s work**

 ***Test Failed***

***My Test. Do I often take an opposite opinion on a matter of belief, because I’m not sure of myself?***

**Test 2. They seek an outside opinion from his parents-who say he was once blind, but now could see – but they don’t know how, even when pressed by the Pharisees for an answer that is suitable to their position. The parents are threatened by the power of the Pharisees-but refer them to their son**

 ***Test Failed***

***.My Test. When faced with a situation I don’t like, do I go elsewhere for a different viewpoint to support my position, even if it’s contrary to accepted facts and understanding ?***

**Test 3. They aggressively go after the beggar, claiming Jesus was a sinner , and browbeating him for an explanation of his blindness.**

 ***Test Failed***

***My Test. If someone disagrees with my position on an issue, do I try to make her/him seem foolish or ignorant ?***

**Test 4. They continue their diatribe against him, claiming they were real Jews following Moses, while he was wrongly following Jesus.**

 ***Test Failed***

***My Test. Do I exaggerate or sprout misinformation in order to protect my own position?***

**Test 5. When the beggar lectures them that it was the power and compassion of Jesus that gave him his new sight, they say he is a fraud and a sinner and throw him out of the synagogue**

 ***Test Failed***

***My Test. When I make a point in a discussion of faith, do I get angry and look for a way to discredit my opponent ?***

***The beggar passed all six tests-the Pharisees failed all five tests. How will I make out with my eleven tests ?***

**The longer the confrontation between the beggar and the Pharisees continues, the harder is their hostility and the more insulting their remarks. Never will they even consider the simple fact that the blind man could see, and the only explanation could be the power of God, revealed in the actions and words of Jesus.**

 **We are reminded that the Lord enters the stage again on learning of the mean and petulant behavior of the Pharisees. Because the beggar is open in heart and mind, not only is he given physical light but spiritual light, going from an old and suffering life to a new life in the Lord. Both physical and spiritual darkness have been replaced by the light of Jesus, who is The Light Of The World. Sadly, the Pharisees have physical light, but their hardness of heart and stubbornness of mind throw them into darkness so they are really spiritually blind.**

**For them, and for you and me, at the beginning of this story, Jesus gives us a warning when he says in verse 5 “ As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.” Take out the “the” in both phrases and replace them with “my”…and it becomes a reminder that Jesus will light up my life as long as I live-and that journey could end tomorrow. Today -one day at a time-I will try and walk with the Lord. *Amen.***