

The people... demanded to know...

*What caused the man's blindness?*

They were convinced... *he was being punished... for a great sin*

The only question...

*Whose* sin caused the blindness?

Certainly not his own... he *born* blind...

So who was it?

His parents? grandparent? Adam and eve?

And Jesus answered them...

*Neither this man nor his parents sinned;*

*he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him.*

*So that God's works might be revealed?*

Are you kidding me?

*Undeserved suffering... revealed... God?*

I'm surprised their heads didn't explode!

So Jesus did it.

He revealed God's power and might

Right before their eyes

And the man blind from birth... *could see!*

Why did Jesus pick *this* man?

A penniless beggar?

Why not someone with clout?

Make a big show of it...

But he didn't.

Jesus wanted to open *everyone's* eyes  
 If a broken soul like this blind beggar  
 Could become exceptional

***Then why not them?***

***Why not everyone?***

Why... not... us...

In another time... another place...

a beggar sat across the street from a painter's studio.

The artist thought he'd make an interesting subject

So... *from a distance*...

He painted the defeated man with the droopy shoulders  
 the sad downcast eyes.

After his final brush stroke... he carried the fresh canvas across the street

***Who's that?***

The image bore a slight resemblance,

but the man in the painting... had *dignity*...

shoulders squared... eyes uplifted... shining and bright...

He was almost handsome!

***Is that me? I don't look like that.***

the artist replied.

***Oh! But that... is the person... I see in you.***

The blind beggar could not see Christ,

But Christ could see him.

***In spite*** of his affliction, he became *relevant*.

***Because*** of his curse, he became *important*.

Back in 1818,  
9-year-old Louis was sitting in his father's workshop.  
His father was a harness-maker  
and the boy loved to watch him work the leather.  
*Someday Father, I want to be a harness-maker, just like you.*

*Why not start now?*  
He drew a design on a piece of leather.  
*Now son... take the hole-puncher and a hammer  
and follow the design  
And be careful... You don't want hit your hand.*

A very excited Louis began to work...  
but when he hit the hole-puncher...  
it flew from his hand and pierced his eye!  
He lost the sight of that eye immediately.  
Later, sight in the other eye failed.  
He was totally blind.

Years later, while sitting in the family garden,  
a friend handed him a pinecone.  
As he ran his sensitive fingers over the cone, an idea came to him.  
He began to create an alphabet of raised dots on paper  
so that blind people could feel and read!  
Thus, Louis... *Braille*  
opened up a whole new world for the blind  
all *because* of a tragic accident!

Just because something bad happens  
*Doesn't mean it's all bad*

And just because something *wonderful* happens  
Doesn't mean it's all *good*

Of the *thousands* who picked the right numbers  
And won a lottery...  
One third... one out of every three...  
filed for *bankruptcy*... within *5 years*  
who've lost everything...

There's a Chinese legend about an old man and his only son.

One night the old man's horse escaped,  
And the neighbors came to comfort him  
*How do you know this is a bad thing?*

Several days later his horse returned with a herd of wild horses.  
Now his friends came to congratulate the farmer.  
*How do you know this is a good thing?*

While his son was taming a wild horse, he was thrown and broke a leg.  
Again his friends gathered to bemoan his new misfortune.  
*How do you know this is a bad thing?*

A warlord came to recruit able-bodied youth for his army,  
and the farmer's son was passed over because of his broken leg.  
And the neighbors expressed their joy.  
*How do you know it's a good thing?*

The story keeps going...  
but the point is made  
*Good* fortune can *quickly turn* on you  
while *bad* fortune can be a *blessing* in disguise.

Is it possible...  
 that God's *blessings* will flow from COVID-19?  
 that *distancing*... can encourage us to be *more social*?  
 that *calling* each other on the phone... can *overcome fear*?  
 that our time away from our sanctuary... can be *with God*?

We all agree... curing blindness is a good thing.  
 But the purpose... the reason... for restoring a beggar's sight...  
 Wasn't to help the blind man

Because you see, the Pharisees were also blind

They *had* all the answers  
 They were smarter than *everyone*  
 They were *always* right.  
*Always...*

And they were not about to be wrong  
 Just because some out-of-town carpenter hit the jackpot

So they called upon eye-witnesses to the event.

After all, *Seeing is believing*.  
 And for the Pharisees it meant  
*only physical or concrete evidence could be convincing*.

When we hear this story today  
 We assume everyone who saw this healing was *astonished*.

When this blind man could suddenly see  
 Everyone *should* have known it was God's healing

And that *Jesus*  
Was of *divine* importance.

After all, no one that was blind from birth had *ever* gained their sight  
It had to be a miracle from God

*Seems* like a no brainer...

But those Pharisees didn't buy it.

After all, if they did... all their power and authority would fall to Jesus  
So they did everything they could do discredit the truth.

*They* could see

They *heard* the evidence

And yet, they denied it because

*They were always right...*

There's a pastor

Who had sticky labels inserted into the service bulletins

*"I'm Always Right!"*

He asked them to put them on right after the confession

And at the passing of the peace, they all had a good laugh.

But after church, the preacher forgot to take *his* label off.

At the gas station, his winning smile had no effect whatsoever.

At the grocery store, the clerk seemed almost afraid of him.

Women averted their eyes. Men looked at him with disdain.

When he got home, his wife walked up to him,

stabbed the sticker with her finger and said

*You're not always right! In fact, you're rarely right!*

Proclaiming that you are *always right*.

stifles conversation, eliminates tolerance, and erects walls of separation.

And that's what the Pharisees did that day

Because of their *need to be right*

They missed the opportunity of a lifetime  
to come face to face with God

And not just the Pharisees

The blind man's parents, too!

Because of their *fear* of those authorities,

They refused to engage with Jesus

And blew *their* chance too

Please don't be like the parents of the blind man

Afraid to see God, because you're afraid to take a chance

Please don't be like those Pharisees

Always right... Never seeing...

Blinder than that beggar

Instead, allow the light of Christ to fill your souls

Let it become glow within you like a beacon of hope

So that everyone you meet

Might come to know

Just how deeply God loves you

And them...