

Discovering Our Blind Spots

"One thing I know; that though I was blind, now I see..."

John 9:25

By Rev. Derek Elphick

Like the man born blind in our story, we are "blind" from birth.

We are born without knowledge...

without the gift of intellectual "sight"
without understanding how the world works...

We can certainly *see* the world around us, but we need knowledge, especially knowledge from the Lord, to *interpret* what it is we're looking at otherwise we remain "blind" to the true significance and beauty of life in this world.

Thankfully, the Lord gifts us with a deeper kind of "sight."

We start acquiring knowledge, lots of it...and the eyes of our understanding are opened.

We learn how to process information, and make sense of it, and draw conclusions, and develop theories.

We learn how to think rationally, and do uniquely human things like laugh, and smile, and talk, and invent, and calculate, and plan, and anticipate a future for ourselves.

But even with all this "sight" we still remain blind to many things.

This is what the Lord meant in the gospels when He said, "*seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear*" (Mt. 13:13).

The point is that it's entirely possible for us to look at something and not see it in the sense of truly *understanding* it or *appreciating* it. As we read this morning, if we believe only what the eyes of our body tell us, we will understand very little (DLW 46).

The teachings of our church explain why this is.

It's because our sight, even our physical sight, is connected to what we love **so that our eyes only see what they *want* to see.**

This is the way the book, *Divine Love & Wisdom*, begins: "Love is the life of a person" (DLW 1).

In other words, love is in the "driver's seat" and controls everything we think about, talk about, and do.

But since we are born with an inclination toward evils of every kind, not everything we choose to look at (or focus on) is healthy or useful.

This is where we get the idea of "turning a blind eye" to something...

If we love something we'll look at it, study it, seek to understand it better and ultimately incorporate it into our lives...

but if we're *not* interested in it, it's almost as if it doesn't exist!

This is where we get the idea of someone having a "blind spot" - a "blind spot" could be an area of ignorance with a person or a bias that they have or an unwillingness to change their mind.

Whatever the particular habit or attitude may be, the person fails to see it in themselves, even when it's obvious to others.

We call this a "blind spot."

In our account from the gospel of John, the man born blind was given the gift of physical sight by the Lord. As incredible as that was, it was only the first part of a larger miracle.

What happened next was even more astonishing.

It shows the formerly blind man's process of discovery as the "blind spots" in his *understanding* were systematically removed...

He goes from thinking Jesus...

is merely a man,
to thinking He must be some sort of prophet
to realizing He must be from God or be God!

This process of discovery happened under extreme duress which is spiritually significant in that our *own* spiritual growth almost always involves a battle, a struggle, a trial of some sort (see AC 4063:2,3).

In the case of this poor man, the Pharisees engaged in a ruthless all-out assault,
with the goal of discrediting him and the Lord's miracle.

But their strategy backfired.

Their attack only *strengthened* the man's resolve to decide for himself who Jesus really was. **He was prepared to face his blind spots. He wanted to *understand* what had just happened to him.**

This account from John 9 presents an "accelerated" version of our own faith journey.

The development of our faith tends to be slower and without any kind of obvious *resolution* because we are in a constant battle between doing what our "old self" wants us to do and what our "new self" wants us to do - will we serve God or Mammon, ourselves or our neighbor?

This explains why we don't see everything we need to see all at once.

It's because there are certain truths, certain realities, that we aren't ready to accept or incorporate into our lives.

One of our lessons today reminded us of the fact that, "*we are not granted inner access to the truths of faith and the goods of charity **except to the degree we can be kept in them to the end of our lives** [on earth]*" (DP 221).

This explains why we have "blind spots" - we don't always see the things we need to see because we simply aren't ready for them, and from the Lord's perspective that's

okay. As we read in our recitation today, *"My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord."*

Reading the Word. How many times have you heard or read a story and said to yourself, "I don't remember that verse or that phrase!" That's because we are changing...As the old proverb goes - no one steps in the same river twice.

Our "wants" change and mature over time. Our tastes and sensibilities change. Our priorities change.

As we combat selfish wants and needs *"new thoughts contrary to those we had before arise"* (AC 2272).

So the point is, our faith needs time to grow and mature...

One of the deep, underlying narratives in the Gospel accounts is the gradual "unveiling" of the Lord's identity...

The New Testament reveals a *process* of people "discovering" who Jesus really is. **You can think of it as a process of people discovering their blind spots.**

In the gospel of Matthew:

"[Jesus] asked His disciples saying, 'Who do people say I am?' So they said, some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets..."

"Jesus said to them...but who do you say that I am?"

Peter: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God..."* (Mt. 16:16)

To which the Lord replies, *"You are Peter, and on this Rock I will build My church!"*

CHRIST = KING (You are the final authority)

At the end of the Lord's ministry, when the Lord predicts that His disciples will abandon Him...it was Peter who said: *"Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life?"* (John 6:68)

And after the Lord had risen from the dead, He says to Thomas,

"Reach your finger here and look at My hands; and reach your hand here and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving but believing." Thomas says: *"My Lord and my God"* (John 20:28).

This is the central issue surrounding the account of the man born blind - it's about his process of discovery; it's about using the eyes of his *understanding* to "see" what others couldn't see or refused to see.

The interrogation centered on one question: is Jesus "from God" or not?

The Pharisees were ruthless in their attack of the man born blind.

First, they tried to claim that he hadn't been blind from birth and even called in his parents to sow the seeds of doubt.

But that didn't work.

So they continued their interrogation of the man which ultimately backfired on them, because the harder they pressed him the stronger he grew in his conviction that Jesus was God, saying...

"If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing" (v. 33).

The Pharisees openly denied the Divinity of Jesus.

They represent strong, negative spiritual forces in and around us that work to glorify the material pleasures and conveniences of this world while simultaneously weakening all that is sacred and pure.

These dark, hidden influences work to discredit the Lord's saving power, *specifically* the Lord's saving power in His Word.

This gets played out in lots of different ways:

Our faith gets tested, "interrogated" if you will...

by life struggles - serious health issues, accidents, loss, a broken relationship, fear & anxiety

by crises of faith (not sure what to believe)

by hard sayings (tempted to throw the proverbial baby out w/the bath water when we come across hard teachings in the Word)

by the comforts and pleasures of the world - who needs God?

by questioning the use of organized religion, why go to church?

There's a striking *qualifier* in the Gospels that reminds us that our relationship with the Lord is reciprocal: sometimes the Lord *couldn't* perform miracles even when He wanted to!

Gospel of Mark says Jesus "*could not do any miracles [in his own country], except lay His hands on a few sick people and heal them*" (Mark 6:5).

You heard the remarkable explanation for this in our reading this morning.

It was "*because [the people in His hometown] had seen Him from infancy like any other man and **were unable to add to that idea the idea of His Divinity***" (AE 815).

In other words, because they couldn't get their head around the idea that Jesus was God, they couldn't be healed!

This principle holds true today - there are many who don't believe Jesus is God which means, by extension, that the truths of His Word don't contain any power to heal people of their pain and anguish or confusion and sorrow.

In that reading we *also* learned that...

*"[natural] diseases represent and thus signify spiritual diseases and spiritual diseases **can only be healed by the Lord, by looking to His Divine Omnipotence and by repentance of life.**"* (AE 815).

This is the ultimate test of our faith! We need to be able to see the Lord's truths in His Word as having the POWER to change us, and heal us, and give us new sight.

Otherwise, these truths remain as just words on a page...

- important words
- even inspired
- but not powerful enough to effect real change.

The Book *True Christianity* says,

*"It is on everyone's lips that the Word comes from God, is Divinely inspired, and is therefore holy. But until now it has not been known where the Divinity is in the Word...people who respect nature more than God or as God and who **therefore think under the influence of their own ideas...**can easily fall into the wrong perspective on the Word and into contempt for it...When they*

read the Word they say to themselves, "What is this?" "Is this Divine?" Would a God who has infinite wisdom talk like this?" (TC 189).

No matter what obstacle the formerly blind man encountered during his interrogation, he *refused* to give up! He recognized that this Man who had the power to restore the *eyes of his body* also had the power to restore the *eyes of his understanding* - which turned out to be an even greater gift!

Listen to these teachings:

*"As to power, namely the power to think or will or perceive, do good, believe or shun falsity and evil; it...all comes...**by means of truth...**"*
(AC 6343)

*"Everyone...can shun evils as if of themselves, **from the Lord's power**, if they implore or plead for it..." (Life 31).*

*"The smallest amount of Divine power is enough, **every time it is called upon**, to tame instantly the entire devil's crew, even if it consisted of millions" (AC 8626).*

The Lord's truth has a wonderful and mysterious way of growing and gathering MOMENTUM in us when we accept it, with humility, as God speaking to us.

It happens when we say, "What am I missing, Lord?" "What am I not seeing?" **This is how the power of truth is UNLEASHED...**It's done by making ourselves vulnerable, by letting the Lord show us our *spiritual* diseases, our blind spots.

These might be...

pride and arrogance
or rationalizations and justifications
or sarcasm and cynicism
or a stubborn insistence that we will do things OUR way.

When we can say, sincerely and honestly, "*I was blind, and now I see...*" a miracle will unfold...**there will be a transfer of power.** The Lord will show us things we couldn't see before.

The eyes of our understanding will be opened and we will be given new loves, ones so much more edifying and wholesome, we didn't think it possible.

So let the Lord be the *interpreter* of life's ups and downs.

Let the truths of the Lord's Word...

- heal your hurt and pain
- heal your frustration and anger
- heal your grief
- heal your broken spirit

Let the truths of the Lord's Word...

- change the way you...

think - feel - act.

May the Lord open your eyes to the true significance and beauty of life in this world because there is so much to be seen that we don't see yet.

Let us thank the Lord for the gift of sight, for the *miracle* of sight, for giving us eyes to see all that is beautiful, kind, uplifting, wholesome and true.

Then we will say,

"One thing I know; that though I was blind, now I see..."

AMEN.

Readings: John 9, AE 815, DP 221, DLW 46, Matthew 13:13