
Stories of Solidarity :: (In)Sight

by michael j. kimpan

*'I tell you the truth : before Abraham even was, **I AM.**'*

Jesus had just spoken his most blatantly blasphemous statement yet, following his defense of the defenseless - speaking out of turn on God's promise to the great patriarch of the faith and claiming he got there first, or that he'd *always been* - right in the middle of the Temple during worship on the Sabbath.

The scribes scurried to grab stones to throw in response to his not-so-subtle claim of divinity - but Jesus had snuck out, avoiding their attack. He had a knack for slipping away from tough spots before things got out of hand.

Along the escape route, Jesus and his disciples came across a man begging for alms from his blindness. *'Mercy. Mercy for a blind man?'*

The disciples took advantage of the situation and asked the question on all of their minds.

Sickness and suffering were commonly held to be the consequence of one's sin - despite the teachings handed down in the story told through the poem of Job, most Jews believed a difficult life was the direct result of displeasing YHWH.

This religious misinterpretation became troublesome, however, when the victim was *born* with a handicap such as this blind man. *Thus, the question.*

'Teacher, who sinned - this man, or his parents?'

Jesus stopped and knelt in front of the man, visibly taking notice of his humanity - an uncommon occurrence for the beggar. *'It's not that either of them sinned. Allow me to shed some light on the situation.'*

Jesus spat on the ground and worked the wetness into the dried desert dirt together in his hand, transforming the dust into clay.

Peter looked over at John. *'Here we go again,'* he whispered. *'Jesus is up to something.'*

The teacher caked the fresh mud on the blind man's eyes and sent him away.

'Go wash yourself in the pool of Silaom.'

The man felt his way down the path toward the pool, washed the muck from his eyes, and walked back...

seeing clearly.

The disciples stared at one another in amazement. Jesus motioned for them to follow down the corridors to another part of town, dodging the religious leaders along the way.

Yet word traveled quickly. Even those who hadn't seen the spectacle in the Temple were now interested in finding this self-proclaimed Messiah. *They wanted answers.*

The man who had formerly been blind disclosed that it was indeed Jesus who had healed him - and the Pharisees ludicrously claimed that very act as proof he was not sent from God.

'This man is clearly not sent from God, because he doesn't keep the Sabbath.'

Others disagreed. *'How could a sinner perform such signs?'*

There was division amongst the people; but in the midst of it, they were unified in one way :

Everyone was looking for Jesus.

The blind man offered up his viewpoint in simplicity : *'Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know - though I was once blind, now I see.'*

'We know Moses was sent from God,' the Pharisees responded, *'but we don't know about this man. Nobody knows where he's from.'* Their emphatic statement conjured up images of burning bushes, holy ground and history's greatest prophet sent to liberate God's people from their bondage. No one could compare to the one who'd seen God's glory with his own eyes.

The man with sight declared, *'Well, here's an amazing thing : you do not know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes. I can see. Since the beginning of time no one has even dared suggest that someone could open the eyes of a blind man like me - if this man were not from God, he could do nothing.'*

'Are YOU now teaching US?!?!? You were born into your sin and blindness! How dare you instruct those who know the Law?!? Get out.'

With that, they put him out of the synagogue and, bidding him farewell, forbid him from entering again.

Again, word traveled quickly. Jesus heard that the man had again been marginalized by those who were truly blind yet still in positions of power, and sought out the man. Finding him, Jesus again declared he had insight into the things of God.

The man worshipped him.

Those Pharisees who had come upon Jesus asked him, *'We are not blind too, are we?'*

And Jesus said, *'If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you insist you alone can see, your sin remains.'*

Having eyes, do we not see?