

4th Sunday of Lent-Year A (for RCIA) March 30-31, 2019 by Kevin Williams

John 9:1-41

Did you ever stop to notice that the Pharisees were powerful and wealthy, but they lived in constant fear. In contrast to that, the man born blind was absolutely destitute, yet he was the one who actually lived in freedom.

Why do I say that? Well, in the story we just heard, we have a great struggle between freedom and fear. You see, besides Jesus, the only person in the story who is actually free is the man born blind. His freedom was rooted in humility. He humbled himself to the glory of Jesus. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were filled with fear. And what exactly were they afraid of? Jesus. A man with no degrees or official position of any kind. Yet they were deathly afraid of Him. But why? Well, the people were captivated by Jesus. And if the people followed Jesus instead of the Pharisees, the Pharisees could lose their power and influence. What was at the root of their fear? Pride. They enjoyed being in power and having influence over lots of people. They liked that feeling and everything that went with it and they didn't want to lose that.

Now, before we go judging the Pharisees, we need to step back and ask ourselves a question.

Does our pride stand in the way of our relationship with Jesus?

Let's take a look at how pride affected the Pharisees. First of all, they had a very rigid view of what it meant to follow God. They knew the Law of Moses very well and they thought if someone else didn't follow the law exactly the way they did, then that person couldn't be obeying God. After the man born blind tells the Pharisees how Jesus had healed him and made him able to see, the Pharisees decided that Jesus had broken the Mosaic Law. They said He had done what they considered to be "work" on the Sabbath and they were so upset they couldn't see straight.

Have any of us ever done something like that? Have we ever judged someone who didn't do things exactly the way we do? When we do, we can find ourselves acting like those Pharisees. And that type of judgment can lead us to attitudes and actions that aren't exactly Christian.

Now, let's get back to the story. When the Pharisees continued to question the man born blind about what had happened, he continued to tell them what he knew. When they didn't like his answer, they started to hurl insults at him.

That leads right to another question for us. Has any one of us ever insulted others just because they disagreed with us?

Next, the Pharisees turned to a third party to try and discredit the man. His own parents. While they admitted that the man was their son and that he had been born blind, they deferred all other questions to their son. Basically, they were pleading the fifth at that point. They knew that anything else they said in defense of their son could incriminate them and they might be expelled from the synagogue. If that happened, they would be cut off from the community. And so the parents were afraid of the Pharisees.

So the Pharisees return to questioning the man. Now the man is getting exasperated at their stubbornness and he states the obvious to them. "This man Jesus made me able to see and yet you are so thick-headed that you can't see what is standing right in front of you". Notice how the Pharisees can't handle being corrected by someone

they judge to be less than themselves. There's that pride rearing up it's ugly head again. So they throw the man out.

Has any of us ever resisted listening to someone we thought knew less than we did? And did we find out later they were right?

Now let's take a look at what happens next. Jesus finds out about the man being thrown out and He goes to find him. I love that image.

Jesus goes in search of the man. He is always seeking us, too. Jesus is constantly looking for us, no matter what we may have done in life, good or bad. He longs for us to be with Him. And His heart aches when we don't know Him.

He wants us to acknowledge Him as the Son of God. And that's what the man who had been blind did that day when he said, "Yes Lord, I do believe".

There is another subtle point to learn from this story. Notice how the man grew in his knowledge of Jesus. The more he learned, the closer he got to the truth of who Jesus really is. First he said Jesus was just a man – then he saw Him as a prophet – finally, he understood Jesus as the Son of God. The same process is true for many other people,

maybe even us. I can look back on my own life and see a similar progression. Isn't it the same for many of us? From the time we first hear about Jesus until we die, we learn more about Him and we grow in our faith. Eventually, we are able to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God like the man in today's story did.

We have a choice to make in life. To choose Jesus or to reject Him. To actively learn more about Him and to develop our faith in Him or to say, "sorry, I don't need you". Along the way, our individual struggle with pride and humility will play a big role in determining whether we will be open to Jesus. The more humble we are, the better chance we have of being open to Jesus. The more prideful we are, the more likely we are to think we don't need Him in our lives. Will we live in humility or pride? Freedom or fear? Which will we choose?