



The blind man on the side of the road, we meet today, does not ask for sight. He receives it! Not because he is special but because he is ordinary and imperfect. Because he is there. It is easy, perhaps even desirable, not to see, not to learn, not to be seen, not to raise questions about the “way things are,” easy just to say, “*I do not see. I do not want to know; there is nothing I can do! It does not affect me or us.*” Easy to simply “sit beside the road” unwilling to be seen or to see. Desirable, perhaps for some, to run away, to disappear when troubles emerge, to be silent, angry, discouraged when the pharisees of our times want us to stay blind or try to tell us, again and again, that sight is only for them.

Indeed, the blind man we meet, did not ask to see! Jesus saw him, as he sees us! Jesus made him see! Any true encounter with Christ, draws us out of complacent apathy, once we are seen, and embrace who we are called and meant to be; once we see the truth around us, within us and beyond us: the suffering of so many today in our country blamed, threatened, rounded up and sent to detention camps; and the terrible heart-wrenching violence of this war. Once we see and become aware that we are part of it, everything is changed—nothing looks the same because Christ walks by, and without our asking, smears our eyes with the dirt of the world and the spit of his life. Then, even though we do not ask, “we see” with a new vision, healing the eyes of our mind, spirit, and body. Then, by his spirit we

can see the worth, value, and dignity of every human being and the right of each to be seen and heard! The “fruitless works of darkness” are exposed! Deafening cries are finally heard.

Once we are touched with the joy, pain, struggle, heartache, and hope of others (persons, peoples, nations, and cultures), then we are given sight, sight we had not asked for; Finally, seeing with new eyes.... what before we could not or would not see, or what was hidden from us. Then we are changed, renewed, and engaged.

That kind of sight may need to be silenced by some because it reveals blindness, our own and that of others. The newly sighted, like the beggar in the Gospel, often become suspect, or thought to be outside the accepted ways of life, especially by those who would sooner keep the many, and themselves in the dark. Like the man born blind in the Gospel, those who see and speak are ridiculed, called names and pushed aside, and blamed for division. Like, in this Gospel story, religion and the scriptures are used, to justify hatred, deportation and war. Is it any wonder that “*sitting on the side of the road,*” with closed eyes, is so popular, blindness so prevalent, and darkness so desired? Today, maybe we are the ones who are seen sitting on the roadside as Jesus walks by. It is easier, sitting on the side-lines, safer not to see, to be blind to the reality and truth around us, even within us. It is easier, not to be present, not to care, not to see what happens to others. It is easier to sit on the sidelines blinded to harsh realities, not wanting to see the “*fruitless works of darkness*” in our time, country and world. Not to look and see, may seem safe, but in the end the light exposes all.

The breath of God in the spit of Jesus is mixed with the “dirt” of this world—the struggle, the “*fruitless works of darkness,*” the shameful violence, divisions, and deeds of hate, war, lies and suffering; the blindness of not wanting to see, *refusing to look*, all mixed with the spit of Jesus and smeared on eyes, smeared on my closed eyes and yours, *on our shared chosen blindness.* The blindness that keeps us uninvolved, absent, silent,

unaware, untouched, unconcerned, unconnected, and afraid to see beyond our own small world. The dirt of the earth mixed with the spit of Jesus, smeared on the blind eyes of our world, nation, city, church, and homes.

Who will find the courage and the trust, like the man we meet today, to walk blindly through the streets with the strength to believe that the mud can be washed away, and blindness healed with the waters of hope, faith, determination, truth, and courage?

Who will go to be washed? Who will go to be sent? Who will go from one place to a new place just to see? Who will have the courage of that beggar on the side of road, there for years, unnoticed, quiet, and unassuming—a man rejected as unworthy and insignificant by the powers of his day.

Who will endure, like him, the harsh words, fruitless deeds of darkness, and the attempts by the fearful, to cast out and silence those who

finally see, using misunderstood, “so-called,” traditions, or powers, as a license to expel? Who will not let themselves be “forced out,” cast aside or silenced?

To see with new eyes, we, like that blind man, first need to be seen, and like the woman at the well we met last week, need to remember that we are worthy! We need to go from the side of the road, bearing the mud of the world mixed with the spit of Jesus smeared on our eyes, to be “A VISION OF HOPE, A PROMISE OF LIFE AND A SPIRIT OF SERVICE.”

But, as the Gospel tells us, it is not enough just to see: like the “Man Born Blind,” ***we must be seen; we must speak, we must endure, and we must believe!***

So here we are on the side of the road, *ordinary and imperfect*, sometimes content not to see. Jesus stands among us, holding in his hands all the dirt and darkness of the world.

SPITTING INTO IT, HE MAKES “MUD.”

