

Fourth Sunday in Lent (A) – John 9:1-41

Discipleship: An Instrument of Joy and Consolation

Focus Question: This week how might you be an instrument of God's joy and consolation?

WORD OF LIFE:

"I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." John 9:39 (NRSV)

Read John 9:1-41

A man who was born blind is given the gift of sight by Jesus. Amazing! Such joy! Jesus not only says, "I am the light of the world," but he acts to bring light. In the case of the blind man, Jesus not only gives light, but illuminates this man's life with colors, shapes, and images to discover.

1. Describe how the blind man's life might have changed after receiving sight.
2. Describe the joy of his family and friends.

What follows is a series of interrogations beginning with the healed man's neighbors and those who knew him. They are filled with disbelief about the transformation of this one known to them as a blind beggar. Some wonder if the healed man is only someone who looks like him. At this point, the healed man can only tell them the facts about this man named Jesus. Like them, he does not understand the process. He only knows that he once was blind but now he sees.

3. What prevents the neighbors from sharing the joy of the healing?
4. What is your impression of the healed man at this point of the story?

The second interrogation is by the Pharisees. Although the healing is on the Sabbath, this does not appear to be the primary concern of the Pharisees. They are more concerned with the process of healing and the identity of the One who heals. No doubt the healed man had done nothing but tell his story of transformation over and over. He offers a simplified version with just the facts, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." (John 9:15 NRSV) After more questions, the healed man confesses Jesus to be a prophet.

The Jews turn on the healed man, vilifying him. They do not believe he was truly blind. The parents are brought to testify on the identity of their son as one born blind. They too do not understand the process of healing or know the healer, so they defer to their son in part out of their own fear.

5. What is your impression of the parents?
6. What seems to be the stumbling block with the Jews and the Pharisees?

The third investigation is of the healed man by the Pharisees. Frustration is mounting, especially for this blind man who is not allowed to rejoice in his gift, but who is forced to analyze the One who gave him sight. The healed man reverses the investigation and asks the Pharisees, "Do you also want to become his disciples?" (John 9:27 NRSV) Later, he adds, "If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." (John 9:33 NRSV) The reaction by the Pharisees is strong. They are insulted at his teaching and drive him out. Jesus responds by seeking him for conversation and consolation. At this time, the healed man takes the opportunity to confess his faith in Jesus, reflecting his own physical and spiritual transformation.

Through their words and actions, it is clear the Pharisees are the ones blind.

7. Where do you find yourself in the story?

WORD AMONG US

The try-outs for the team did not go well. Early on, Nick could tell the coaches were not impressed with his skills. He tried to catch their eye with his positive attitude and extra efforts. But the end result was not favorable. Despite all his extra efforts, he did not make the team. It did not seem fair. He was inconsolable.

1. How do you begin to console someone who is inconsolable?
2. Name experiences which prompt us to feel sadness.
3. What does it feel like when someone consoles you?
4. How can someone turn sorrow into joy?

The tests results came back with a clean report for Gail. She gathered her friends and family together for a great party as they rejoiced at a new chance at life. Yet, her sister-in-law seemed irritated at the party. Her sister-in-law's attitude was confusing to Gail.

5. Give an example of when you felt like you were given a new chance at life.
6. How do you respond when others cannot rejoice with you at times of joy?

The blind man in John 9 is given the gift of sight by Jesus. He is physically and spiritually transformed by Jesus and given light to see and believe. Not all rejoice with him. In fact, there seems to be little joy on the part of others for the blind man who is given the gift of sight. No party is called. Instead he participates in three investigations as others try to sort it out. He ends up being run out of town. By the end, the healed man says, "I believe."

Sometimes we do not have clarity, especially as we experience change in our lives. Through the process of asking questions, we can sort out our priorities. Yet, it can be unsettling for others to probe while we are still sorting things out.

When Jesus hears the healed man has been driven away, Jesus seeks him to offer consolation and clarity. The healed man is a grateful seeker who wants a better understanding about the One who healed him. At this point, it does not matter what others say. The healed man is looking face to face at his savior, the One who healed him, the One from God. With that he confesses his belief and begins to worship Jesus.

7. After his final conversation with Jesus, how might the healed man tell of his healing?
8. How did Jesus console the healed man?
9. How did Jesus bring joy to his life?
10. What can we learn about consoling others?
11. How does Jesus bring joy to our lives?

Prayer

"Lord, make me an instrument of peace. Where there is sadness, let me sow joy; Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console." Amen

Dig Deeper
Ephesians 5:8-14

LAST WORD

Pray each day this week:

Lord, where there is sadness, let me sow joy;
Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled
as to console