

The people... *demanded* answers...

What caused the man's blindness?

They were already *convinced*... it was *punishment*... for a *great sin*

Their *only* question...

Whose sin?

Certainly not his own... he *born* blind...

So who was it?

His *parents? Grandparents? Adam and Eve?*

And this time... Jesus actually answered them...

Neither this man nor his parents sinned;

he was born blind... so that God's works... could be revealed in him.

So that God's works... could be revealed?

Are you kidding me?

Undeserved suffering... revealed... God?

I'm surprised their heads didn't explode!

Jesus revealed... God's power and might

Right before their eyes

And the man blind from birth... *could see!*

Why *this* man? This *penniless* blind *beggar?*

Why not someone famous... important... someone everyone knew...

Them make a big production out of it...

But he didn't. Just a few words... quietly spoken...

And Jesus opened *everyone's* eyes... to a *new possibility*

If an irrelevant blind beggar... Could become exceptional

Then why not them? Why not everyone?

Why... not... me...

In another time... another place...
a beggar sat across the street from a painter's studio.
The artist thought he'd make an interesting subject
So... *from a distance*...
He painted the defeated man with the droopy shoulders
the sad downcast eyes.
After his final brush stroke... he carried the fresh canvas across the
street

Who's that?

The image bore a slight resemblance,
but the man in the painting... had *dignity*...
shoulders squared... eyes uplifted... shining and bright...
He was almost handsome!

Is that me? I don't look like that.

the artist replied.

Oh! But that... is the person... I see in you.

The blind beggar could not see Christ,
But Christ could see him.

In spite of his affliction, he became *relevant*.
Because of his curse, he became *important*.

Just because something bad happens
Doesn't mean it's all bad

And just because something *wonderful* happens
Doesn't mean it's all *good*

There's a Chinese legend about an old man and his only son.

One night the old man's horse escaped
And the neighbors came to comfort him
How do you know this is a bad thing?

Several days later his horse returned with a herd of wild horses.
Now his friends came to congratulate the farmer.
How do you know this is a good thing?

While his son was taming a wild horse,
he was thrown and broke a leg.
his friends returned... sympathizing for his *new* misfortune.
How do you know this is a bad thing?

A warlord came to recruit able-bodied youth for his army,
and the farmer's son was passed over because of his broken leg.
And the neighbors expressed their joy.
How do you know it's a good thing?

The story keeps going...
but the point is made
Good fortune can *quickly turn* on you
while *bad* fortune can be a *blessing* in disguise.

We all agree... curing blindness is a good thing.
But the *real* purpose... of restoring a beggar's sight...
Wasn't to help the blind man
But to cure blindness... of big shots... namely... the Pharisees

They *had* all the answers
They were smarter than *everyone*
They were *always* right.
Always...

And they were not about to be wrong
Just because some out-of-town carpenter hit the jackpot

So they called upon eye-witnesses to the event.

After all, *Seeing is believing.*
And for the Pharisees it meant
only physical or concrete evidence could be convincing.

When we hear this story today
We assume everyone who saw this healing was *astonished.*

When this blind man could suddenly see
Everyone *should* have known it was God's healing
And that *Jesus*
Was of *divine* importance.

After all, no one that was blind from birth had *ever* gained their sight
It had to be a miracle from God

Seems like a no brainer...

But those Pharisees didn't buy it. Why not?

Because all their power and authority disintegrate...

So they did everything they could do discredit the truth.

They could see

They *heard* the evidence

But rather than accepting it as truth...

They *Colluded* against Jesus...

Colluding... is the forth "C"

In the Sneak attack of the Five "C"s

It's on the Back Cover of your bulletin...

Colluding, or engaging in a mutual,
often subconscious, reinforcement of distorted, dysfunctional,
or dishonest perspectives with others,

triggers negative thoughts

by fostering, anxiety, guilt, and a loss of reality.

It creates mental gridlock and intense emotional fatigue
while trapping individuals in a cycle of blame and denial
that erodes self-trust and authenticity.

No matter how much we want to collude with each other

To push back against unseen or unknown enemies...

It has *no effect* on them...

And it's *disastrous* for us.

Collusion involves enabling or denying harmful behavior, encouraging us to question our own sanity as it distorts the truth.

It creates a fear of being exposed requiring ongoing emotional vigilance.

The energy-draining nature of maintaining a false reality causes significant psychological stress.

We're engulfed in deep negative feelings about being complicit in dishonesty.

We get stuck in a cycle of blame and justification rather than taking personal responsibility.

So why do it... When it's so harmful to us

The Pharisees colluded to maintain their status quo which required deception and denial fostering further negativity.

The Pharisees projected their own unwanted traits... of anger and inadequacy... onto each other...

The hoped the target of their abuse... Jesus...
Would become less confident
But it had the opposite effect.
Jesus didn't become powerless over their attacks.
In fact... His power was affirmed by his actions of kindness.

There is hope for us as well...
By breaking the cycle of collusion
and engaging in honest self-reflection
We can disentangle ourselves from the pattern.

After all... subjects of our colluding... have no idea you're after them.
Nothing changes. Colluding fails.
So how do we break the bonds of colluding?

The popular daily devotional *The Word for You Today* categorizes people you encounter in life.

1. **Confidants** (trusted inner circle)
 - People who are *for you* unconditionally.
 - They're in it for the long haul
 - Refuse to exploit your secrets
 - and support you through both success and failure.

2. **Constituents** (those who support your cause)
 - People who are *for what you are for*.
 - They share a common cause or goal with you.
 - However, their loyalty is tied to the shared target rather than you personally
 - So if the cause changes... they move on.

3. **Comrades**
 - People who are *against what you are against*.
 - They are your allies in a specific fight or against a common enemy.
 - And *comrades*... make ideal partners in *colluding*

During our lifetime...
we meet lots of constituents and comrades...
but **very few confidants**.

Be suspicious of *Constituents*... those who agree easily
But be even more careful with *Comrades*...
Where bonds of hate and distrust are strong...
If it's not about love, it's not about God

Then *nurture* your relationships with your close *Confidants*.
Because those relationships are the ones
Centered in love...

Love One Another... As I have Loved You

In other words...
Love... is a much better... than being right...

There's a priest
Who inserted *post it notes* into the service bulletins
"I'm Always Right!"
He asked them to put them on right after the confession
And at the passing of the peace, they all had a good laugh.

But after church, the priest forgot to take *his* label off.
At the gas station, his winning smile had no effect whatsoever.
At the grocery store, the clerk seemed almost afraid of him.
Women averted their eyes. Men looked at him with disdain.

When he got home, his wife walked up to him,
stabbed the sticker with her finger and said
You're not always right! In fact, you're rarely right!

Proclaiming that you are ***always right***.
stifles conversation, eliminates tolerance,
and erects walls of separation.

And that's why the Pharisees ***Colluded*** that day

Because of their ***need to be right***
They missed the opportunity of a lifetime
to come face to face with the living God

And not just the Pharisees
The blind man's parents, too!

Because of their ***fear*** of those authorities,
They refused to engage with Jesus
And blew ***their*** chance too

Please don't be like the parents of the blind man
Afraid to see God, because you're afraid to take a chance

Please don't be like those Pharisees
Always right... Never seeing...
Blinder than that beggar

Instead, allow the light of Christ to fill your souls
Let it become glow within you like a beacon of hope
So that everyone you meet... Might come to know
Just how deeply God loves... ***all of us***...

*For what good is an open eye
When the heart is blind...*

*Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch; like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.*

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!*

*The Lord hath promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.*

*When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.*