

7 Ways of Resistance for Lent
Week Four: Resolution
John 9:1-41

Sin: what separates us from God.
In practice: what separates us from each other.

In Jesus' day, sin was used as a dividing wall to keep certain people away from you, people that would make you ritually unclean, people that would reduce your status:

- the poor
- the sick
- the dying
- the disabled

There was a man blind from birth, and the disciples saw him and asked Jesus, "Who sinned, this man or his father?"

There was a common belief that sickness or disability were caused because of sin. There was also a common belief that sin could be passed down to the next generation. In the Hebrew Scriptures, Moses spoke of the punishment of sin being passed down to the third and fourth generations. However, prophets such as Jeremiah began to refute the idea that children and future generations were responsible for the sins of their ancestors. Rather, the prophets began to see it as the future generations suffered as the repercussions of their ancestors' actions.

This idea of sin being passed down was already being refuted and debunked. But it still persisted in the culture. And the idea that disability was a result of sin still prevailed.

Jesus says, "Nope." Neither this man nor his father sinned. Rather, "this man was born blind so that God's work might be revealed in him."

--Now, a warning. We must proceed with caution. It is all too easy to infer that God made some folks with disabilities to prove a point. The author of this blog is a parent of a child with a disability, and if she had a dollar for every time someone told her that God gave her a son with autism so that she would be a more faithful Christian, or so that she would learn more deeply God's love, or any other sort of platitude, she'd be fairly well off. Those sort of things make the person saying it feel better about themselves and also help them to avoid an uncomfortable topic: that some people are disabled. That all of us, in a sense (as Nancy Eisland, author of *The Disabled God*, would say) we are all temporarily abled. And it's hard to not make that connection with what Jesus is doing here.

However, after this man regains his sight, the people remember him as the one who used to sit and beg. If you were disabled, you could not work as others did. You had to beg. Now that this man can see, he no longer has to beg, and is no longer an outsider.

The difference here is that Jesus' healing restores the economic injustice done. Healing is not the same as curing. Healing is about restoration.

Very few people experience healing that is curing. Instead, the kind of healing that Jesus brings is restoration.

But of course, the people question how Jesus did this, and the religious leaders are concerned because it took place on the Sabbath. They refuse to see (pun intended) the injustice of their system. They refuse to see the ways their system of clean/unclean kept out others. They are so caught up in a system of rules they cannot act outside of that system. They cannot see it.

The story proves a point: seeing spiritually is not about having ocular vision. Seeing spiritually is viewing through God's vision of a beloved community in which all people, of all economic backgrounds and all abilities are included as God's children.

Because we might not judge someone with a disability as having sinned today, but we certainly still judge the poor. We blame choices people make in their lives (often choices out of their control). Folks who live at or below the poverty level are left out. If you don't have a home, you can't register to vote or get a library card. If you don't have a home, it's hard to attend school or to get a job. We judge those who don't have a job, who beg on the side of the road, who don't complete their education. We judge those with addictions and mental illness and too many bills to pay.

To resist the ways of our world, the way of empire, we must resolve to change our thinking. We must resolve to do away with the concept of sin as one that allows us to separate us from others. We must resolve to spiritually see our kindred in Christ, as Christ sees us.

Worship Ideas for Resolution

- Set up the table with cameras, telescopes or kaleidoscopes.
- Purchase disposable cameras and invite children to take pictures throughout the worship service, and print the pictures to bring in the following week.
- Give each child a kaleidoscope to use during the worship service, to see new patterns.
- Have paper and pencils for people to make new resolutions to change their ways of thinking, to resolve to be open to new ideas about others.
- This should not be a one-time thing, but consider how people with disabilities are included in your worship service. Is your choir loft accessible for persons with wheelchairs/walkers? Are folks with disabilities included as ushers, greeters, or as worship leaders? Check your own practices and work to be more inclusive of persons with disabilities in the worship service.

Mission Ideas for Resolution

- Resolve to learn about another culture or religious tradition: visit a mosque or synagogue.
- Resolve to work to include persons with disabilities in all aspects of church life (see above for worship, but also in Christian Education, administration, and outreach).
- Resolve to notice people who often go unnoticed—elderly folks, people living on the streets, etc. Visit a senior citizen home or go speak to your neighbors on the street and ask what their needs are and what the church can do to help.

Liturgy

Call to Worship

As long as Christ is in the world,

Christ is the Light of the World.

As long as Christ is in us,

The Light of the World is in us.

As long as Christ calls us to love one another,

We are called to share the light and love with the world.

Come, shine your light, share your love,

And by the light of Christ, we will see the New Way. Amen.

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Holy One, we confess that we have passed judgment before we can know or see. We have condemned without hearing the story. We have turned our backs without even knowing there is someone behind us. Forgive us for our lack of insight, for our misjudgment, for our ignorance, and for the injustice of our own actions. Turn us back to Your ways. Change the ways we view others. Help us to judge only ourselves, in how we follow Your commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

For indeed, God did not send the Son into the world in order to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Christ. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Know that Love prevails, Love wins, and Love will see us through. Go, be open to the vision of God to see your siblings in the world, and be open to changing your mind, because God is always calling us to change. Amen.

Prayer

God of our turning world, our revolving Earth, our spinning galaxy: help us to know that everything is constantly changing, and we must change. Help us to change our minds from old stuck-in-the-mud ways of thinking. Open in us Your love and wonder of creation, and Your love for all Your children. Help us to build bridges instead of walls, to make ways in the wilderness and to call forth all who have been left out, for You are creating a beloved community. May we resolve to be part of Your beloved community and to resolve to change our minds to align with Yours. In the name of Christ, who calls us to The Way, we pray. Amen.