

**John 9:1-4 1**  
**Jesus is the light of the world**  
**3/2/08**  
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**One sentence sermon: As the light of the world, Jesus takes us from meaninglessness to purpose**

**Scene 1 Sometimes we cannot see Jesus for who he is**

Have you ever driven by that homeless person under the bridge, careful to avoid looking into his eyes? You know he is there, but you do not look into his eyes? Yes, we have all done this. We are afraid if we look into his eyes, we might feel his pain. And we have enough of our own pain and do not want to be infected by his. Especially since we do not have time to roll our windows down.

Few people look into the face of that blind beggar in Jerusalem. We know this because after Jesus heals him, the town folk debate whether this man who can now see was really the blind beggar, or someone who just looks like him.

Sometimes we also cannot see our future leader for who he is. For example, 3000 years ago, Jesse did not realize that his 8<sup>th</sup> son, the one they called “Boo-boo,” the accident, the youngest and smallest of his sons, the Cinderella son who is stuck with all the grunt work, that this one is to become the future king of all of Israel. King David.

And the Pharisees, the ones who specialize in those adverbs “should” and “must,” who are the keeper of the Leviticus rules, these Pharisees cannot see the light of the world, and reject those who can. They reject the formerly blind beggar, because he can see something they cannot see. And they reject the very light of the world.

But before we fault the folks who walk by the blind beggar and cannot recognize him later. Before we fault Jesse for overlooking his son he calls “Boo-boo.” Before we fault the Pharisees for overlooking the light of the world, let us try to understand why they, and we, are so blind.

**Scene 2 Jesus does not fit our categories of understanding**

Imagine standing on a beach in the Caribbean Sea in 1492. Over the blue ocean, beneath the clouds and sun, on the horizon, you see Columbus’ three masted ship. A triumphant testimony to Europe’s conquering of star maps, wind, ocean, and the logistics of feeding and hydrating men on a lengthy sea voyage. Now instead of being a European, try to imagine you are a Carib Indian. You have never seen a three masted ship. It defies all your categories of understanding. History books record that Columbus’ ship, the one which brought disease, death, and enslavement to the Carib Indians, was invisible to them. All they see that day in 1492 was blue ocean, clouds, and sun. Right up until the Europeans stepped out of their ship.

I went to divinity school to find answers to my questions about why bad things happen to good people. So the first time I read John 9, I thought it was about bad things. “The Pharisees asked, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind.” And Jesus answered, “Neither. This man was born blind that the glory of God might be revealed in him today.” Today’s scripture tells us God does not cause suffering either to punish or to instruct. Suffering occurs randomly, and when it happens, God is the first one to cry. Suffering occurs, and God is present with us in the suffering. This is the major

theological point that you can share with those who suffer, something to give them comfort.

But this scripture is not just about suffering. It is rich with meaning. It is also about a way of seeing.

### **Scene 3 But God in Jesus opens our eyes to new categories of understanding**

What we see here is a major paradigm shift. Instead of seeing God as the divine punisher, we see God as the divine comforter. Instead of seeing God as the aloof creator who has left us home alone, scripture is about a God who feels our pain. What are we to do with those scriptures that disagree that Jesus' judgment is mercy, and not punishment? We remember that Jesus himself interprets scripture, and his interpretation is our interpretation. He says many times, "You have heard it said ... But I say..." We see in the story of the blind beggar, not God as the divine punisher, but God as the divine comforter. A whole new category of understanding. One for which the Pharisees are as blind 2000 years ago as the Carib Indians were in 1492. One for which some of us are blind even today.

We seek meaning in our daily existence. We can't sleep at night, lying in bed worrying. We go through the motions, having lost interest in our jobs, our families, and our hobbies. We tell ourselves there are just too many hours in the day.

But Jesus is a lamp unto our feet. The Light of the World gives us meaning. Jesus asks us to continue his ministries. And we discover that there is within each of us a seed planted by God, that if watered by showing kindness to those less fortunate than us, that if we water that seed, something in us flowers. Something we do not understand blooms. We regain our meaning in life. Through prayer. Through wrestling with scripture in Bible study. Jesus, the light of the world, gives our lives meaning and purpose through embodying and continuing the ministries he began 2000 years ago. How much more meaningful and purposeful can our lives be than by embodying Jesus?

### **Conclusion**

The faceless homeless person beneath the bridge. Carib Indians in 1492. Too many hours in the day. We are, all of us, blind. We need a light unto our path. We need Jesus. Nothing less than the light of the world. Glory be to God, Hallejuah, and Amen.