

1 Samuel 16:1-13

John 9:1-41

THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND

Have you ever asked someone for information and help,
only to find that they know as little as you do about the subject?

Sometimes they try to look good by giving an answer
they made up on the spot.

And if you followed their advice, surely you regretted it.

It's a dictionary definition of "the blind leading the blind."

I was astonished to find an online reference to a preserved historical
document in Sanskrit, written between 800 and 200 before Christ,
that says, "Abiding in the midst of ignorance,
thinking themselves wise and learned,
fools go aimlessly hither and thither, *like blind led by the blind.*"

Now if we trust someone mistakenly, we are not fools,
we were just misled by their claim to knowledge.

In our reading from John, there's a huge debate, practically a court trial,

about the man born blind who was healed by Jesus.

Please note that wherever it says “the Jews” in this passage,
it means the Pharisees.

Now the Pharisees are bent out of shape because no blind person
has ever received sight before, so they just can’t believe
that it happened.

And as they learn about the one who healed the man,
they are furious because he performed the healing on the Sabbath,
when no work is to be done.

Look how the discussions go back and forth.

It starts with the disciples challenging Jesus about whose sin
caused the man’s blindness.

The way Jesus answers them is a huge surprise to their usual way of
thinking.

No one sinned; he was born blind so God could be glorified
when Jesus heals him.

Jesus contrasts the daytime, when work can be done and appreciated
and the approaching night when no work can be accomplished.

This is more than literal, it's a spiritual truth.

Jesus reminds his disciples, “As long as I am in the world,

I am the light of the world.”

But the time is coming when Jesus will no longer be in the world,

and his disciples will be reminded that *they* are the light of the world

by their faith.

The Pharisees cannot believe that the former blind man

really is the same person they knew as a beggar.

To test him, they ask over and over how he was healed.

When they ask him what he thinks of his healer, he tells them,

“He is a prophet.”

Still unsatisfied, they get the man’s parents to verify that

he is indeed their son and that he was born blind.

They only go so far in answering the Pharisees

for fear of their judgment, and tell them to go talk to their son.

After a while, the former blind man gets sick and tired

of relating the same details of how he was healed.

But the Pharisees are angry at him for pointing out that

the healer had to be a man of God, so they chase him away.

Better to ignore problems than deal with them, right?

Jesus finds the man and reveals that he is the Son of Man, the Messiah.

And he makes a profound statement:

“I came into this world for judgment
so that those who do not see may see,
and those who do see may become blind.”

Some nearby Pharisees arrogantly say,

“Surely we are not blind, are we?”

And Jesus replies that they are indeed blind because they are sinful.

They are blind to the light of the world,
they are blind to their Messiah,
they only see the ways of their usual life.

And those who follow the Pharisees’ teachings are blind, too,

preferring arrogant power over learning the difficult truths of God’s world.

The blind leading the blind.

Now most of us know the story of how David came to be anointed King,

but I hope you enjoyed reading it again in detail.

Samuel is a mighty prophet; he always obeys God,

doing and saying what God tells him to.

God tells him how to get into Bethlehem without encountering Saul,

who wants to kill him, and once he is there, whose house to visit.

God promises to tell him which of Jesse's sons is the chosen king.

Before they sit down to eat after the sacrifice,

Jesse takes a good look at Jesse's sons, starting with the oldest.

Now it's interesting that Samuel has certain expectations

that blind him to God's choice;

God has to tell him one by one, "No, this isn't the right guy."

I imagine it was with some sense of frustration that Samuel—

a prophet who hears and sees God's will—

has to ask Jesse if he might have another son tucked away.

When young David is summoned away from the sheep he's been guarding,

and walks into their midst, at last the LORD God says to Samuel:

here's the right one! Anoint him.

It's important to notice and remember that when Samuel anointed him,

"the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David

from that day forward.”

Even Jesse and his other sons were blind to David’s true calling—
no one expected him to be worthy and chosen,
which is why he was still out in the pastures with the sheep
while they were hosting their guest and playing future king roulette.

Let us pray together, wherever we are:

Lord, sometimes we are willfully blind to what you show us,
and sometimes we are really blind to what we don’t know
so we ask for help.

Protect us, Lord, from following other unknowing people
so we don’t all stumble together and fall into a ditch!

Help us to seek answers from your Word and from your Spirit in prayer.

In your precious name we pray,

Amen.