

"Why Was I Born?"

John 9:1-41

Recently we were having a discussion following a Wednesday night video about our lives in relationship to those who are poor. Perhaps you have given some thought to the question, "Why was I born where I was and when I was?" Have you ever thought about that? Living in another part of the world a thousand years ago would not have been quite like it is for us now; and even right now we could be living in a poverty stricken country of the "third world". My guess is that some of you, if not all of us, have also asked the question, "Why was I born?" Chances are we think that way if things are not going just quite right or well. If it is very serious issue, some may even wonder if it is even worth living any longer. Some teen suicides of recent times revealed answers to their desperate actions. Being abused or criticized, or made fun of, have caused some to say it is no longer worth living. It was a horrible accident on the Youngman a week ago taking the life of State Trooper Dobson. Anyone who loses a loved one feels in the early stages of grief that life has ended for the survivors also. Can you imagine how the 71 year old man who hit the trooper must feel? What about the person who was stopped for speeding? Certainly that person must be taking some blame for the horrible tragedy. What do the disabled ask themselves? What do doctors ask if they botch up a surgery? What do parents wonder if their baby is born ill? What did King David ask after his son was killed? What do you ask when you are having a horrible day? Do you ask the same if your day is going just fine? Do you ever ask, "Why was I born?"

Do you want to bet that the blind man had asked himself many times, "Why was I born?" He had to have felt entirely useless no matter how many times someone tried to help him feel differently. We can sympathize with this man, but not empathize. Then, to have the question asked "Who sinned?" Whose fault was it that he was blind? The disciples ask the question, but we can be confident that the question had been batted back and forth in the local coffee shop or beauty shop. We want to blame, find a reason and fault,

and to excuse some and hang others when tragedy happens. That is a view of sin for some, but not for Jesus. He never really answered the question, and he was not about to get into any battle with anyone about that view of sin. That's not to say that there is no sin, but Jesus would not minimize someone's need with a judgment of who is at fault. Before the man blind from birth says anything, Jesus already has made his healing mixture of mud and saliva. This is comforting for sinners like you and me. Whatever has blinded us, or attacked us, from outside or within, Jesus still seeks us out. Jesus has an eye on every one of us. Maybe his eye is in clearer focus on us because of the effects of our sin—that is, our brokenness, pain, agony, embarrassment, disgrace. Jesus seeks out all his lost ones, his children, his sheep, and he claims us all as his own. Our baptism reminds us of the certainty of the love and grace of our heavenly Father for us. We are claimed and marked, and sealed forever his own.

The blind man is healed physically, and also spiritually. His healing leads to his knowing Jesus and professing Jesus to be the Messiah. If this story were simply about a physical healing of someone ill, this might not mean as much to some of us without the healing. But it isn't limited to being simply able to see a sunset or an early spring flower. It is the awakening of the mind and soul, the heart and spirit, to know our God, to bend our knees before his throne of mercy, to sing our praises to our Messiah and Christ. It is recognizing and proclaiming Jesus to be our Lord and Savior. It is for us seeing the cross on which our Lord claims us forever forgiven and redeemed. In all of this comes healing as God works his wonders in us to see him, to know him, to love him and to follow him more dearly and clearly each and every day. The blind man is found, he is claimed, he gives his profession of faith in Jesus, he is healed, and he is sent to give witness to what has happened to him. Why was this man born? It is as Jesus told his disciples, "he was born that God's works might be revealed in him". It is the same answer given to each and every one of us.

Sin is a controversial subject. It's been that way since Adam and Eve were fooled in the garden. Generally we think of sin as doing something bad or wrong, against the law and rules, then, suffering the consequences. That is sin most certainly. But if that is the only concept of what sin is all about, then we are

going to have difficulty understanding forgiveness and mercy. Because if you don't do things wrong, obey the laws, slow down on yellow lights and pull over from an emergency vehicle, then you don't suffer consequences and can begin to feel a little good about yourself, as compared to the ones who break the rules, the sinners. That is pharisaical. And if you happen to be one of the sinners, it might be tough moving on. That's why some people don't feel comfortable in church. Some places give the impression that no "sinners" are allowed. Jesus really blows off that perception of sin. He reminds us of a bigger issue with sin. Sin breaks us apart, destroys us, eats away at our self-esteem, and devours us. Sin is about the brokenness of the world and life. Sin is not what God wanted to happen between him and man and woman, or between person and person. The man born blind knew about sin because he was on the outside and in darkness. He was in need of mercy, hope and help.

Jesus quickly reminded the Pharisees, and you and me, that we can be blind even if we can see. What is our purpose in life? Why were we born? If we think that we are useless because we have sinned, then what good are we? If we are sick or injured thinking that we are getting what we deserve, then we probably don't have a high regard for God. If we are thinking we are pretty good and everyone else is questionable, then we probably do not have the heavenly 20/20 vision. If our purpose is only about ourselves, then we really are having some eyesight issues. If we are thankful we are not like others, or live here and not elsewhere, or live among good people and have lots, then we ought to re-read this passage. Our poor vision of God shows up in how we live, act, think and speak. Most of us need a heavenly eye exam.

I've asked the confirmation students for years to fill out a worship review. The first question is "What were you thinking about when you entered the church today?" There have been some interesting answers over the years. What were you thinking about when you entered church today? Could you answer honestly? I have overheard things at times that make me wonder if any guests would ever return after hearing some of the conversations. Sometimes, quite frankly, we are out of focus when we enter into the church. The cross is obvious for a reason. It helps our vision and keeps us in focus about why we are here. We need to be here

because we are all sinners. We have done the bad things and suffered the consequences, and we are also born into a condition that we can't get out of by ourselves. We need the cross. We need the outstretched arms of our Lord to save us. We need Jesus to be our Lord and Savior. That's what's on our mind when we enter this house of prayer. With his help and healing, we begin to see things more like he does.

Why was I born? You and I were created to manifest the presence of God in and to this world. That is what Jesus said about the blind man who was born so that God's works might be revealed in him. Let's not be bogged down by too much of the past if it happens to be painful. God forgives, and gives us new beginnings each day. Give some serious thought and effort to being the revealing presence of God in and to this world this coming week. It is not necessary to be overly religious. Simply be all you can be as a child of Christ. Be merciful and forgiving. Love others and especially work at loving those not so easy to love. Be slow to judge. Help others to see goodness and mercy. Be a healing presence to those lonely or forgotten, or burdened and weary. A smile is really healing for people. Welcome and acceptance is what this community of faith is all about. Use the gifts God has given you for the good of others. Do good even if it costs you something. You'll be repaid. Be humble and thankful. Realize that our blessings of life are the results of God's grace, and with those blessings then he expects grace to come from them. If you are so inclined, let me know what else we can do to reveal our purposes as people of God and as this congregation. We are sent to go from here to serve. There is a reason we were born. God did rejoice the day we were born because he knew there was another child to be claimed as his own who would serve him and be a light of what good God will do through him and her. After all, remember the good God did through King David, a sinner as he was, and surely God still makes good come from bad. All of us born _____, were born so that God's works might be revealed in us. Lord, have mercy. Give us strength. Keep us in faith. The Lord be with you.

The Rev. William L. Kay Friday, April 01, 2011