

“Lord, I Believe”

John 9:1-41

Although the Pharisees were almost unanimously, single-mindedly bent on destroying Jesus and His ministry, that was about the only topic on which they, as a group, were in total agreement. From their discussions with, and questions directed toward the Lord during His days on earth, along with the volumes of books that were written by the rabbis of that day, it is clear that there were serious discrepancies in what was taught from one rabbinic school to the next – and I’m not even taking into consideration the Sadducees, the high priestly ruling class who said there was no life after death and had basically rejected the major teachings of God and salvation.

I’m just dealing with the Pharisees. Although the Pharisees ended up being in agreement that Jesus needed to be done away with (the one thing the Sadducees agreed with also), we read in the Gospel of John that, at this particular time, they were having a disagreement in interpreting the signs and miracles of Jesus. Some of the Pharisees said, “He doesn’t keep our rules and regulations concerning the Sabbath; therefore He can’t be from God.”

Now I need to give you a little background information so that you understand how convoluted their thinking was. They accused Jesus of “working” on the Sabbath because He spit on the ground, made some mud, and smeared it on the blind man’s eyes. They were not criticizing Him for potentially spreading a virus. In the Sabbath laws given to Moses by God Himself, it is true that certain activities were forbidden on the Sabbath. One of the forbidden activities on the Sabbath was kneading dough. All cooking

for the Sabbath was to be completed on the day before – on Friday.

Not only were the men not to go out into the fields and work or attend to the duties of their place of business, but the Sabbath was to be a day of rest for the women also. The grace of God has always been extended to all His children.

However, doing good on the Sabbath was not forbidden. A doctor healing a wound was not forbidden. Rescuing an animal that had fallen into a pit is clearly stated in Holy Scripture as being an acceptable activity. God's laws are filled with common sense and love for His children. And they are meant to be interpreted with common sense and love for His children.

But the Pharisees, sticking to the letter of the law, said that Jesus' activity of squishing together spit and dirt to make mud was equivalent to kneading dough; and was therefore forbidden on the Sabbath. Their hatred for Christ overshadowed any plea for common sense or mercy for the blind man.

However, there was a somewhat vocal faction who, at least for a while, questioned how Jesus could not be from God. He had just healed a man who had been born blind. Only God has the power to do such things. And it wasn't as if this were the first miracle that had gotten their attention.

These events took place while Jesus was in Jerusalem. This wasn't yet Holy Week. This was a different time He was in Jerusalem, but nevertheless, the city was most likely buzzing with stories and rumors and debate concerning just who this Jesus of Nazareth really is.

This most likely went on all the time and in most every city or town Jesus and the disciples entered. We know that on one occasion, Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do the people say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

Then Jesus asked them, "Who do you say I am?" And Peter gave his great confession of faith and said, "You are the Christ; the Son of the Living

God.”

There is a great difference between those who have only heard about God, and those who have heard the Word of God so that they know who God is. This is the struggle in the world today. And this was the same struggle that was going on in Jerusalem at the time of Christ.

Who is Jesus? They had all heard of Him. They had heard all about Him – so they think. And the people took a snippet of information from here, a rumor from there, mixed it in with their own opinions and preconceived notions about God, and assumed Jesus to be whatever their minds desired Him to be. Some will say, “I think He is this.” Others will say, “I think He is that.”

Some thought of Him to be a prophet from God who could heal their illnesses – which He was; although He was much more than that. We come to Him today with a prayer of healing in the midst of this virus; but the depth of our prayer is for a healing of more than just a physical illness. The cross and empty grave brought an ultimate healing to us.

Some wanted Him to be their “bread king,” like the 5000 who were fed by Him and wished to crown Him there on the spot. Some wanted Him to be a miracle worker who could entertain and dazzle them with His power -- “Show us a sign” they continually cried out.

Some wanted Him to be a great general who would rally the troops and drive out the Romans. And some just wanted Him to be dead and out of the way.

Things are no different today. The majority of people have little use for the Lord in the way in which He appears to us in Holy Scripture. The crowds have a hard time getting excited about God so long as the daily routine of their life is going pretty well. But when they need something, then they become religious. Who knows, perhaps the response to this coronavirus will be a great spiritual awakening. We hope and pray.

Some people are waiting for a miracle or a vision from heaven to stir their soul, but they are blind to the many miracles that we experience in our

daily life. That we are alive, not only physically (which is miraculous in and of itself. Random chance did not take a collection of hydrogen atoms and morph them into carbon-based sentient being with a brain stem.

I just learned this a week ago – it blew me away: There are more patterns of connections between neurons in your brain than there are subatomic particles in the universe – by a substantial margin. Look in the mirror and know that this is the work of God). But beyond that, the greater miracle is that we who were walking in darkness have become children of light, as Paul says. Having the light and life of Christ in us is nothing short of a miracle.

Like those who wanted Jesus to drive out the Romans, some people today believe that God's main job is to clean up society and He obviously has been an immense failure. And like many of the Pharisees, there are those today who just wish God were dead and out of the way – “We don't need the guilt.”

Spiritual blindness comes in many forms and fashions. Everything from crass atheism to immense piety claiming holiness for ourselves without the real need for God's forgiveness.

It is nothing short of a miracle that we have been called to be children of God. We too were born blind. And like that man who washed the mud off of his eyes and was able to see clearly for the first time; so too, our eyes were washed clean that we could see exactly who Jesus is. With our new eyes, we can see beyond the rumors and opinions about God, because He has been revealed to us.

We now firmly confess our faith in our Creator and Redeemer. We are beyond the realm of spiritual wandering saying, “I think God is this” or “I think God is that.” And as we have already confessed in the words of the Creed, we can say along with the man whose eyes were opened, “Lord, I believe.” Amen.