

# Was blind, but now I see...

If there were a single Gospel story chosen to illustrate the difference between the synoptic accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and the poetic writing of John, it could well be this week's comfortably familiar story of the healing of the man born blind.

Of course, all four Gospel writers talk about the many healings performed by Jesus. But while Matthew, Mark and Luke are happy to tell us what Jesus did, John draws us in further to show us the who, the how and (as only the poet can) the "why" of these amazing events. The other writers tell us the facts of the "case." John shows us the faces.

Where the earlier Gospel writers Matthew, Mark and Luke (who didn't actually publish their recollections 'til between thirty and forty years after Jesus' death) are concerned with informing the early Church about what Jesus did, John (whose account is dated around 90 CE) is more interested in illuminating the Cosmic *truth* of the experience of Jesus.

He holds closely to the ancient Hassidic maxim that "the truth is much too important to be limited by facts."

So what is the "truth" about this blind man? The truth is, he is not a man, not a woman, not a child, not a parent. He is humanity. Us. This isn't to say that humanity is blind or deaf or dumb (notwithstanding the fact that as a species we've got work to do in these areas) but to illustrate that the blindness, deafness, dumbness has purpose not only for the afflicted person, but for all whose lives touch theirs.

The ancient answer to the question "Why is there evil, blindness, death, pain" was simple: Sin causes it (as when Jesus' followers ask him "Was it this man's sin or his parent's that caused his blindness?") John wants us to understand that one of Jesus' revolutionary departures from common Judaic belief is his teaching that all life's experiences -- the pains, the sorrows, the joys, the ups, the downs, the deaths (even his own)---are blessings, lessons, challenges and opportunities for the love of God to shine through us in both the light and darkness of life.

As only John would recount it, Jesus doesn't accomplish this or any of his other marvels through a "Just Say No!" or a "Just See" wishful thinking approach. Jesus does it through work and through natural elements (the making of the mud paste.) As Sister

Prejean so eloquently says when asked by her "Dead Man Walking" Death Row inmate if her believing is easy: "Oh no! This isn't about easy faith. It's about hard work." Jesus works to make the miracle happen, and he tells the blind man to work too, to go to the healing pool of Siloam.

Perhaps the most touching detail of John's account is the last paragraph, where Jesus, having heard that the authorities had thrown the formerly blind man out of the temple, seeks him out to comfort him and say: "This world judges you, this world rejects you... I welcome you. Come."