

I Know It's True

Fourth Sunday in Lent, Year A – John 9:1-38

preached by the Rector at St. Paul's, Henderson, March 30, 2014

Lord, take my eyes and see through them. Take my lips and speak through them. Take my soul and set it on fire with love for thee. Amen.

While they were on their way one day, the disciples noticed a man who had been born blind and pointed him out to their master. Jesus mixed a little dirt and a little spit, smeared the resulting goo onto the man's eyes, and told him to go and wash it off. When the man came back from washing his face, he could see. Some of his neighbors were amazed. Some of them were doubtful. Some of them dragged the man to the synagogue, and he told his story to the religious leaders. "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They argued with the man – he told his story. "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They dragged his parents into it – he told his story. "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They reasoned with him – he told his story. "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They threatened him – he told his story. "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They drove him out of the synagogue – he told his story. They drove him out of the community – he told his story. Very possibly, they drove him out of town altogether – he told his story. "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

One Sunday some years ago, when this story had been the Gospel reading, a member of whichever parish I was serving at the time stopped on his way out the church door. He looked at me hard and asked, "do you *really* believe that a man born blind was literally, physically healed by Jesus?" He paused, keeping that same hard look, and then added, "Because I *don't*." I don't remember how I answered him that day, but I think about that encounter quite often.

You see, I *do* believe that Jesus performed just such miracles while he was on Earth. Now, I don't know if this story is historically accurate in every detail. No one had a video camera. There wasn't a tape recorder or stenographer handy. For that matter, as a student of history, I am reasonably prepared to argue the point that the concepts of fact and accuracy at the time this story was recorded, were completely different than the understanding of *anyone* born after the eighteenth century. But in spite of all that, in my head, and in my heart, and deep down in the pit of my stomach, I *know* that this story is *true*. I know that it's true because the only reason we have this story recorded for us to read this morning is because someone was *changed* by being present with Jesus the day this blind man was given his sight. I know that it's true because someone just *had* to tell the story of a man who was born blind, and how, after Jesus had touched him, he could *see*. I know that it's true because someone *kept* telling the story, and kept telling the story, and kept telling the story, over and over and over again, until it was finally written down.

Throughout the history of God's involvement with his people, the story of that relationship has been passed on. Through hundreds and thousands of generations, God's people have told and retold the story of how God had touched them. In the unknown land to which God had called him, they kept telling the story. Working as slaves, in bondage to Pharaoh's Egypt, they kept telling the story. Through the wilderness and into the Promised Land, they kept telling the story. When they were dragged away to captivity in Babylon, and when they came singing back to their homeland, they kept telling the story. When the Anointed One spoke of a new way of seeing the Kingdom of Heaven, and when the fire of the Spirit of God had come upon them, they kept telling the story. When the milk and honey flowed, when the grain grew thick even on the hilltops, when the increase of the faithful spread like wildfire through

the whole world, they kept telling the story. And under the taskmaster's lash and the waterless tracks of the desert, and in the fiery furnace and the lions' den, and facing the wild beasts of Roman coliseums and the swords and bullets of despots and dictators, they kept telling the story.

They kept telling the story because they had seen God at work in their own lives. Like the man who had formerly been blind, God's people kept telling the story, and kept telling the story, and *keep* telling the story not because of some concept of fact or accuracy, but because they have been *touched* by God's glory and grace, and they can't *help* but tell the story.

That's why *I'm* a Christian. I'm not a Christian because Scripture covers every possible nuance, every possible question in today's life, or because it is somehow inerrant, without flaw or contradiction. Those of us who actively engage the Scriptures know all too well that it was written by and for real people, people that struggled every bit as hard with the issues of living as we do today.

I'm not a Christian because the history of the Church is without blemish. We who are the heirs, for better or worse, of two thousand years of tradition, know all too well how often the name of Christ has been used by those who spread terror instead of compassion, suffering instead of love.

I'm not a Christian because today's Church is so perfect, nave upon nave, pew upon pew, *filled* with perfect people who have *all* the answers. We who *are* the Church know all too well our many excesses, our many shortcomings, our all too *many* failings.

If tomorrow archeologists discovered indisputable evidence that the blind man was still physically blind after his encounter with Jesus... you know, I would *still* tell the story we read this morning. If tomorrow a seminar of biblical scholars came to the learned conclusion that there is not a single word in the Gospels that could actually be traced to the lips of the historical Jesus... I would still tell the story. If tomorrow another "prince of the Church" published yet another book, this one with absolute proof pointing directly away from the the healing of blind men, away from the virgin birth, away from the crucifixion *and* the resurrection... you know, I would *still* tell the story.

Because, as important as archeological evidence, biblical scholarship and prolifically published primates may be, my faith doesn't rest on any of it. I would still tell the story because my faith, my hope, my *life* rests on the sure and certain knowledge that I *myself* have been touched by Jesus Christ. I would still tell the story because I have been *changed*, I have been transformed to be something different, something *more* than what I would be without Jesus in my life. And like the man who was formerly called blind, I couldn't stop telling the story if my future depended on it. I couldn't stop telling the story if my life depended on it. I couldn't stop telling the story if my whole *world* depended on it!

I don't know if it happened just that way. I don't know if it could happen that way today - or tomorrow. I don't know if anything else about the story matters at all. But one thing I *do* know, that though I was blind, now I see.