

“Master, I want to see.” Do we really? Do we really want God to take away our blindness? Now I’m not talking about 20/20 vision or the miracle of lasiks, I’m talking about the blindness that effects us all; the blindness that only lets us see the truth we want to see. Today’s gospel is about a question. Do we dare ask God to allow us to see things as they really are. Do we dare ask God to allow us to see things as He sees them? Can we handle it? Can we handle the error of our perceptions, can we handle the gross mistakes of our judgements? No one wants to be wrong, especially in front of God. But that’s really the first lesson. That’s the lesson the blind man teaches us in our Gospel.

Imagine for a moment that you are blind from birth. You have no concept of color, shape, or depth. The reality you know, you have had to construct from your remaining senses. (hearing, touch, smell, taste). OK then, you have an idea of what the world looks like, even though you can't see it. You know this world, you are familiar with it in a very special way because your other senses have been heightened by the loss of one. Now imagine; imagine someone wants to come along shake all that up, to alter the world you are familiar with, the world you have worked hard to understand and form a picture of, especially in the deficiency of sight.

We're talking here about destroying the reality you have labored to become familiar with, accustomed to, and comfortable with. We're talking about re-arranging a blind man's furniture, without telling him what we've done. Pretty cruel isn't it? But in this case it's not "we" who are doing this; it's the blind man himself that demands his furniture be rearranged. Why would he do that, why would he do that to himself?

It's the same thing with our gospel. The blind man had a good thing going. All he had to do was beg. People felt sorry for him because of his blindness, and gave him a coin here and there. He made a living, he ate, he had friends, people knew him, he functioned, he had a role and a stable existence. In one sense that's what we all long for. And on top of that, he didn't know any different. How could he? Yet, he dared to ask Jesus to turn everything he knew upside down.

We don't think of a blind man asking for his sight as a courageous act. But is it any different than an alcoholic asking there to be no more booze in the world? Is it any different than a terrorist asking there to be no more enemies in the world? Is it any different than us asking God to make us see ourselves and the world as **He** sees it? No, because God's view is **radically** different than what we think it is and are accustomed too. And in that sense we are all **blind** and our job is just what the blind man did: To ask the Lord to help us see as He the Lord sees. That's a challenge, because in doing so, we have to be **willing** to let-go of everything we are accustomed to. But if we're courageous and willing, wonderful even miraculous things are possible.

To put this in some context, A brief story about the life of a young Irishman, Noel Kenny. Noel himself relates: “Around 1979 the heroin epidemic swept through our community, the inner city of Dublin, and all the young people ended up hooked on it. I had two brothers that became addicts and after seeing the devastation it brought into our home and into their lives, I made a vow that I would never be addicted to anything.

When I was 18, however, I started hanging out with a young man named Mick and we smoked some dope together. I was sort of an inward type and this gave me confidence—something I needed in my life. For the next four years it just became my everything. The things I had dreaded about my brothers' life had come upon me. I started to dislike myself and everything I was doing.

In 1989, Mick came strolling through the flats once again. He'd been away for some time, but all of a sudden he was there with a Bible in his hand saying "Jesus Christ can change your life." We thought, "Look what drugs have done to poor Mick. Now he thinks he's God."

Noel continues, "With the gang it was easy to jeer and to slag Mick off, but when I was on my own, I knew he had something that I needed in my life. There was a peace in Mick's face that I didn't see in anyone else's in my community. So I invited him up to my flat to smoke some dope, for old time's sake. He came up, but instead of doing drugs, he told me about the love of God.

“If I did believe there was a God, he sure wouldn’t come down to the flats and have anything to do with all of us,” I said, secretly hoping that was not true.

I kept saying to Mick, “What do I have to give him? Do I have to give God my drugs? My money?”

But Mick said, “No, he loves you just the way you are. But he also loves you enough to change you **from** the way you are.”

Like the blind man Bartimaeus, like the addict Noel, Jesus invites us today to say, “Lord, wipe my world away (as comfortable and familiar as it is), and give me yours, even though I’m not sure what that will mean for me.” When we can bring ourselves to ask that, then God can begin to truly help us see.