

What do you see?  
[written in oral form]

John 9:1-41  
Lent 4, year A

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The delightful song by Marc Cohn, released in 1991, is “Walking in Memphis.”  
The song is reflecting on a holy experience in Memphis.

The final verse is setup with:  
“When you haven’t got a prayer  
    Boy, you have a prayer in Memphis”  
And continues:

Now Muriel plays a piano  
Every Friday at the Hollywood  
And they brought me down to see her  
And they asked me if I would do a little number  
And I sang with all my might  
She said, “Tell me are you a Christian, child?”  
And I said, “Ma’am, I am tonight.”

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A moment of awe and with likely a divine touch.

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Christian pragmatists were quick to reject that confession –  
--typical. They pointed out that being a Christian is more complicated than that.

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I have had numerous epiphany experiences.  
Some were petitioned, but most were a surprise.  
Often, they are beyond explanation.  
Also, I have discerned a circumstance as a sign from God.  
Unfortunately, people typically dismiss such introjection.  
Instead of celebrating and inquiring, the divine signs are rejected.

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A miracle healing was dismissed in today’s Gospel story, the person healed even  
was attacked.

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The day was the sabbath, Jesus the disrupter, just could not pass up the  
opportunity to irritate the rule keepers.

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Jesus and his disciples saw a “man born blind.”  
His condition is significant and symbolic.

The man knew he was blind, and he was born that way; it was NOT his fault.

Yet, most everyone else looked for blame.  
Blindness is terrible, so the conclusion was there must be reason, and it was likely from sin, so they assumed.

Jesus, focussed on what could change / what could be, instead of looking for blame. *Instead of looking for blame.*

Jesus saw an opportunity / a teachable moment.

Jesus declared, “I am the light of the world”, and light illuminates, exposes, and ends darkness for those in the open.

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Jesus spit on dry soil and placed the mud on the man’s eyes.  
Part Jesus and part creation. From dust to life,  
The born-blind-man could see!

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All were amazed that he could see.  
This had never happened before.  
The Pharisees / the religious leaders / the defenders of the faith investigated.

Miracles and individual, divine encounters should be shared with the community.  
Without community discernment, such “personal” experiences could merely be indigestion,... and they could drift into superstition and projection.

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The religious leaders did the right thing, but in a very bad way.

They did not celebrate the gift of sight.  
The pragmatists were blind to possibilities / blind to anything that challenged their dogma and rules.  
And so, they attacked the man and dismissed Jesus.  
They pushed him to renounce Jesus,... all in defence of their religion.

Yet, the once blind man **could see**.  
During the inquisition, he declared,  
“Here is an astonishing thing!

You do not know where Jesus comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.”

The now seeing man was expelled.

He gained sight, but lost everything, his family, community, religion, and his vocation as a beggar.

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Nevertheless, He Could see! He could see the beauty and wonder,... and he could see the ugliness and his isolation.  
He could see.

And there is where Jesus found him. The man was looking, and was found. The now seeing man was ready; he was invited, and he believed in Jesus the Son of God.

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Jesus came to expose / to reveal / to separate those who **think** they can see **from** those searching to see.

The religious leaders asked, “Surely we are not blind, are we?”  
The “are we?” was a crack in their façade, but just a crack.

Religious dogma and theological structures are like walls that end the search. Walls bring safety and comfort, yet they impede vision. [\*]

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I was once told, “I do not want to be challenged / afflicted in worship. I just want to feel good.”  
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The religious leaders were fixated on sin as if breaking a rule was a sin. Sin is anything that hurts our relationship with God. It is a rejecting God. I think claiming to **know better** rejects divine surprise / rejects God.

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The seeing man saw his aloneness / his loss. He saw the good and the bad. In his search, the loving touch of God saw him / found him. He saw God. He was not alone.

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This is a message for those defending the church, for those outside of the church, and for all those who are open to a divine surprise.

This lesson should make us uncomfortable, yet hopeful.

From my personal experiences, I can say:  
God will respond to our search / our need in the darkness.

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May we look outside our bubble / our comfortable walls.  
May we look for wonder and celebrate whenever God's love brings healing,... for anyone.

May we look to see.