

## *“Standing up to the light”*

**March 2, 2008**

*Text: Ephesians 5:8-14, John 9:18-34*

### I.

This reading from John’s gospel is a most compelling story. In many ways, its truth of light coming into the eyes of a man born blind serves as a metaphor for the entire gospel. Certainly, for the author of John, Jesus is *the light of the world*.

And as the prologue to John suggests, about the light:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot put it out (John 1:1-5).*

And so the question for us this morning: when the light comes, **can we stand up to it?**

The light of truth about ourselves ... about our lives ... about the decisions we’re making ... about our most basic values and commitments. When the light comes, **can we stand up to it?**

Aren’t there times in our lives when ... it’s like *a light bulb goes off* and we go, *yea, that’s it*.

That’s what my life is about ... or, that’s what has been missing in my life, or in my marriage or in my parenting. *That’s what I believe ... that’s what makes sense about whatever*. Aren’t there times in our lives when we come to a new realization about things?

### II.

For the man born blind in John 9, he couldn’t possibly have imagined what was about to happen to him. Jesus comes across him one day, learns about his blindness and goes into action.

Rubbing mud on the blind man’s eyes, he instructs him to go and wash in the *pool of Siloam*. The man does as Jesus directs him and comes back seeing. Imagine the change! Suddenly, in a moment of time, everything is different. His whole world is turned upside down.

**LET’S TAKE A LOOK!**

- Not only can he see, and all that that implies;
- But, now he can no longer hide behind his blindness.
- Immediately, upon attaining his sight, his responsibilities change.

It's like one of those moments when we say: *Be careful what you pray for.*

In this light, there's a curious quality about many homeless persons—have you noticed? Many of them prefer their homeless lifestyle. To suddenly change, find employment and a place to live ... would be to take on a whole world of responsibilities that they're just not up for. For these particular homeless people, that's waaay too much pressure.

It's much the same for persons who have just been released from a long period of prison time. Often times, they long for a return to the prison days of predictable and safe routine.

Back to our gospel story, it's interesting and telling how, throughout this story, the former blind man's view of Jesus—his experience of Jesus, of who Jesus is—changes. It evolves ...

If we think about it, coming to faith is like that, as the light of belief shines brighter along the way.

#### CHECK IT OUT!

1. When the neighbors and those who were looking on ask the man how this happened, how is it that he can now see? his reply was, *the man called Jesus did it.* And then he goes on to tell the story of his healing. But he refers to Jesus as *a man, the man called Jesus.*
2. Later, when the Pharisees are aggressively interrogating him, some of the Pharisees are divided about how this had happened and the role of Jesus in it all. So, finally, they ask the blind man again, *what do you say about him?* And the man says, ***he is a prophet.***
3. And then, finally, when Jesus seeks out the blind man to talk with him, Jesus reveals to the man who he (Jesus) is. Immediately, the man worships him, saying, *Lord, I believe.*

We note the change and transformation ... as the man born blind, to whom sight has now been given ... evolves to the point where he believes. In his mind and experience, Jesus evolves from Jesus the man to Jesus the prophet to Jesus as Lord.

### III.

There's a lot going on in this story from John. The neighbors and onlookers, to begin with ... they're in disbelief. They'd just seen the man a few minutes earlier. *Is that him,*

they wonder? *Or is it someone else?* Understandably, they're not sure what they're experiencing.

And the parents ... no doubt their first reaction was jubilation and joy. Their son who was born blind can now see. All the guilt they'd felt through the years ... about his blindness; it's gone. Yet, on the down side, as practicing Jews, they didn't dare credit Jesus and say they believed in him. They could be thrown out of the synagogue.

And of course the Pharisees and *the Jews*. They were beside themselves with anger and rage. Jesus was already enough of an irritation and now this! Right away, they're into damage control. Everybody's talking about it: this man born blind now sees. And they're saying Jesus did it? What are they going to do?

As we can see, everybody in the community is affected. And for the blind man who now sees for the first time, his world is radically altered. For him, clearly, light has come. But his challenge will be: ***Can he stand up to it?***

#### IV.

All of us have experiences in life where we have opportunities to change and to grow ... to see ourselves and our lives in a new light ... to *see* differently ... with eyes that are *reborn*.

In a reflection on this passage, professor Frederick Neidner, who teaches biblical studies at Valparaiso University, says, identifying with the blind man:

*We knew the old ways in the world of darkness. We cowered. We begged. We had an excuse for everything we couldn't or wouldn't do. Now, however, we find ourselves blinded by the light.*

I like that. And it's so true.

- We get blinded by the light whenever a new truth or awareness comes into our life that makes us anxious.
- We know it's true ... and we know we ought to give ourselves to the new awareness and make the necessary changes.
- But we're not sure we can measure up. We're not sure we want to make the change and stick with it.
- We're not sure we want to grow that badly.

***Standing up to the light.*** We're not sure we can do it.

## V.

Always, you see, we gotta give up stuff. However, it's Lent, a time when we reflect on *giving up things* and what we need to do to be honest and true to our faith.

The man born blind has to give up his blindness ... along with the darkness and all that *was* his old life. Sometimes the light seems too bright ... too revealing of hard truths and tough challenges that we're not sure we're up for.

Before, in the darkness, life was easier ... expectations were lower. Everywhere, there was less pressure. Hey, it's the human situation.

Just as with the man born blind, we, too, in our human situations—our daily living—rise from the mud with new sight and new hope, empowered by the One who, every moment, calls us to life ... to be *alive* to the best that is in us.

Friends, we're not locked into the blindness of our past. We're not contained and held back by yesterday's darkness.

As **Ephesians** reminds us: *For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light. And then, GET THIS: For the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.*

## VI.

All the time, in different ways, people ask me *how will they know?* How will we know when our lives are *good and right and true?* How will we know when we're on the right path ... in our marriage ... with our children ... in our career path ... on our faith journey? *How will I know it's right for me?*

My response is always, *you'll just know. On a feeling level, you'll know.* It may not all come at once, but, over time, you'll know. When we live as *children of light*, practicing the presence of God every day, the *light* of God's truth ... the light of God's purposes is revealed to us.

It's in our heart ... it's in our soul ... it fills our spirit; we can feel it. And we know.

When the *light* comes, friends, we know. When the man born blind returned from the well at *Siloam* able to see, he knew. How could he not know? He could see.

We, too, know. Our question is: ***Can we stand up to the light?***

- Can we make the changes and adjustments we know we need to make?
- Can we be the person we know we're supposed to be?

- ***Standing up to the light*** ... trusting God ... refusing to throw in the towel to the fear that we don't have what it takes to make the changes we need to make.

Friends, live the life that God calls you to live! Do it! You know what it is ... or at least you have a glimpse or an impulse. *Go for it! Do it!*

*For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord, you are light. Live, then, as children of light!*

***All praise be unto God! Amen!***

Dr. Jeffrey E. Frantz  
Miami Lakes Congregational Church, *United Church of Christ*  
6701 Miami Lakeway South  
Miami Lakes, FL 33014  
On the web at [www.mlchurch.com](http://www.mlchurch.com)