

John 9:1-41
The Sin of Doing Nothing!
WRCoB 3.19.23

Last Sunday, right after church service
Someone approached me and wanted to share
A truth that hit this person like a ton of bricks.

Eyes were opened to something never considered before.

It was this.

In our time of prayer, I had prayed God's forgiveness
On those things we did
That we shouldn't have done

In other words, the sins of commission.

And then I prayed God's forgiveness
For the things we didn't do that we should've done.

The sins of omission.

The truth of this struck this person profoundly.

That one can not only sin by doing wrong!
But sin by not doing what is right!

And that is what confronts us
In our Scripture Lesson today.

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Our Scripture Lesson takes place on the Sabbath.

Now Jewish Sabbath rules were very strict.

Sabbath laws prevented you from doing all kinds of things
Namely anything that could be considered work

God created the heavens and earth in six days.

On the 7th Day, God rested

But rest doesn't necessarily mean that God
Tired out from so much work
Needed to sit down, catch his breath, and rest.

What it does mean is that on the 7th Day
God ceased working.

There's a difference.

But as humanity always likes to do
We push against the margins.

And the Jews pushed against the laws to the point
Where Sabbath law became very strict and convoluted.

Since ceasing work lay at the heart of Sabbath law
Doing medical activities were strictly forbidden
Unless a person was at the risk of death.

Since this particular blind man was blind from birth
And didn't need emergency care

They took issue with Jesus
For healing him on the Sabbath.

They thought Jesus should have told the blind man
To call his office on Monday morning
And make an appointment for a consultation.

And then another appointment to schedule tests.

And after the tests came in, another consultation

And then, Jesus could schedule a day
For the procedure to take place.

Which of course, could not/would not
Ever be allowed to done on the Sabbath!

Well, Jesus was just passing through.

And besides, he didn't think much
Of the hoops he'd need to jump through
To be a proper religious person.

So, he did what he thought best.

He placed a mixture of mud and water
On the blind man's eyes
And told him to wash in the pool of Siloam

The blind man did just that and was healed
Much to the chagrin of the religious leaders

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As with Nicodemus and Jesus earlier
Who had a disjointed conversation
Concerning spiritual and physical things

Jesus and the Pharisees in today's lesson

Have a disjointed conversation about blindness
Physical and metaphorical blindness.

John 9:39 NLT

³⁹ Then Jesus told him, “I entered this world to render judgment—to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind.”

To which the Pharisees ask, “Are you calling us blind?”

Well, Jesus thought, if the shoe fits

Jesus was fed up with having to do the things
Which were considered right
In the eyes of the religious institution.

Rather, he decided to do what was right in the eyes of God.

He saw a need and he met it, right then, right there.

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I want to draw your attention
To three groups of people in our lesson.

The disciples, the neighbors, and the Pharisees.

John 9:1-2 CEB

9 As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who was blind from birth. ² Jesus' disciples asked, “Rabbi, who sinned so that he was born blind, this man or his parents?”

It seems the disciples
Weren't all that interested in helping the poor man

Instead, they felt a need to theologize about his condition.

Did he or did his parents sin
That he was blind from birth?

After that, Jesus healed the blind man.

And then we see this reaction.

John 9:8-9 NLT

⁸ His neighbors and others who knew him as a blind beggar asked each other, “Isn’t this the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹ Some said he was, and others said, “No, he just looks like him!” But the beggar kept saying, “Yes, I am the same one!”

The neighbors weren’t that much interested
In the actual healing of the blind man.

What they wanted to know was, was it him? Or not?

And then the Pharisees chimed in.

John 9:15 CEB

¹⁵ So Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. The man told them, “He put mud on my eyes, I washed, and now I see.”

Notice anything peculiar about this?

It doesn’t seem any of the three groups
Had any real interest in the blind man himself.

The disciples wanted a theological debate
The neighbors wanted to know his identity

And the Pharisees wanted to know how it happened.

Spiritual blindness.

Nobody ever thought to help or even pity the blind man.

And after he was healed
Even to praise God he was healed..

Fred Craddock puts it this way.

*. . . what the disciples wanted to do was not help the man,
not look to Jesus for changing the man's condition, but
discuss it.*

*Everywhere you go there are people like that. They'll change
the kingdom of God into a discussion group.*

*"Who's going to make the coffee next week?" And the
church becomes a great book club.*

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Do you see where I am going with this?

It relates back to my opening illustration.

The disciples, the neighbors, even the religious leaders
Did not believe they were doing anything wrong!!

They just weren't doing anything right!

And Jesus calls them out for it.

Just who is the blind one here?

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The sins of commission and the sins of omission.

The Pharisees were quick to call out
The sins of commission.

Jesus, you can't heal on the Sabbath!
Why, it's a sin.
Don't you know that?

Jesus, you can't have your hungry disciples
Glean the wheat fields on the Sabbath
That's a sin, too.

Jesus, stop hanging out with sinners and tax-collectors.
That is so sinful!

God forbid, we would never do that!

On the other hand
The Pharisees were blind to their own hypocrisy.

They were oblivious to the needs before them
Or if aware, chose to ignore it.

They were more concerned about doing the right thing
When actually the right thing to do
Stood right in front of them
Everyday at the pool of Siloam.

Here we see the sin of omission on full display
People more interested in talking about
Than doing anything about
The needs of the world.

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The Catholic Church defines the sin of omission as

“The failure to do something one can and ought to do.”

The Bible defines it this way.

James 4:17 CEB

¹⁷ It is a sin when someone knows the right thing to do and doesn't do it.

So, to make it perfectly clear

A sin of commission is like going over
And burning down your neighbor's house.

A sin of omission is watching it burn.

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It reminds me of the story of the Good Samaritan.

A man gets beaten and robbed on the road to Jericho.

A Levite and a priest pass the beaten man by
On the other side of the road.

Along comes the hated Samaritan and cares for him
Bandaging his wounds and paying for a room at the inn

The priest and Levite had justifiable reasons not to stop.
But the point is . . . they did nothing.

They walked by him on the other side of the road.

And so, which was the greater sin?

Intentionally stopping to care for the beaten man

But becoming unclean and unable then

To perform their religious duties at the temple?

Or passing the beaten man by

Ignoring the needs of someone right in their way?

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Jesus makes it very clear.

Matthew 25:42-43 CEB

⁴² I was hungry and you didn't give me food to eat. I was thirsty and you didn't give me anything to drink. ⁴³ I was a stranger and you didn't welcome me. I was naked and you didn't give me clothes to wear. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me.'

The sin of doing nothing!

John Piper, retired pastor from the Twin Cities

Speaks on the sins of omission

As it relates to racism.

*It's not good enough for people to simply **not be racist**, we must systematically **oppose racism** when we see it, even when we're not directly involved in the act.*

We sin when we allow racism to continue and don't speak out against it. This inaction is sin.

All around us, evil only thrives when good men and women do nothing.

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So, here's the challenging question before us today.

One I continue to struggle with.

How do we do more than just book studies
And discussion groups
And attending conferences and seminars?

How do we do more than just ignore racism
Hoping it will go away?

I believe West Richmond has reached this point.

Where do we go from here?
What is God's will for us at this time?

Inaction is an action.

It is an intentional choice to maintain the status quo.

And, of course, Jesus had something to say about that.

Matthew 25:45 NIV

⁴⁵ 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'