

The Blind One at the Pool

John 9:1-12

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Preparation

You will need enough cups of water to have one between two people.

Setting the Scene

Scripture Reading: John 9:1-12

Preparation

For the actual mediation people will be seated in pairs facing one another. Invite people to choose a partner and to sit in these pairs. Explain that in this meditation about the blind person, one person in the pair will imagine themselves to be the blind person and the other will take the role of Jesus. Ask them to decide who will take each role.

This meditation involves some physical action as well as use of our imaginations. When the story is re-told, as the blind person's stretches out their hand, you who have that role should stretch out your hand. Similarly the person taking the role of Jesus will stretch out their hand, and follow the other actions in the story, including using the water in the cup to touch the blind person's eyes. Although the story is re-told from the blind person's viewpoint, the person taking the role of Jesus is invited to imagine the scene from Jesus' perspective. You may remain seated throughout the meditation.

Invite people to center themselves, closing their eyes, slowing their breathing.

Meditation

The day is hot and dusty. You are sitting in a familiar place in the market. * The smell of over-ripe food and sweaty animals is not new to you, nor are the flies that swarm about your face. * The air is filled with voices - local merchants soliciting passing customers, the gossip of elderly folk, the laughter of children. *

You sit alone in silence with a hand outstretched, begging for small change from faceless figures in the crowd. * You have been blind since birth, and cannot imagine the kaleidoscope of colour which surrounds you. The world of sounds and smells is familiar to you, yet lacking something you cannot name. *

Blindness has brought you solitude. Distanced from the hustle and bustle of the marketplace, there is much time to think. What feelings surface as you reflect on your life as a blind beggar? What longings do you feel? What thoughts do you have as you contemplate your past and

future? *

You hear approaching voices engaged in earnest discussion. A few men and women, maybe six in number. * As you stretch out your hand, more out of habit than hope, the voices stop in front of you. * What is happening? Sometimes a coin is thrown in your direction, sometimes a kick, but no-one ever pauses for an instant. You cringe, expecting to be struck or spat upon. *

A woman speaks. "Teacher, whose sin caused this person to be born blind? Was it their own or their parents' sin?" What strange words? How do they make you feel? *

A man replies. His rich voice sends a shiver down your spine. Although young he speaks with father-like gentleness and authority. "This person's blindness has nothing to do with their sins or their parents' sins. This person is blind so that God's power might be seen at work in them. I am the light that this person needs, that the world needs." *

What an astonishing statement? How do you react? Is it with wonder or fear? * "God's power might work in me". What hopes arise in you? *

Impulsively you reach out your hand towards this voice. A warm hand grips yours. You are startled. No-one has ever touched you like this, but the firm and friendly grip brings its own reassurance. *

You hear the man spit, although now you do not flinch. He releases his grip and places a hand under your chin. * You feel his gentle fingers, damp with water and mud, caress your eyelids. * A warmth flows through his hands, a strength, a mysterious power. *

As this person speaks to you, you remember the name you heard - Jesus. "Go and wash your face in the pool" he says. What does he mean? What has he done? *

Hands grab and propel you towards the nearby pool. You fall shaking to your knees, and thrust your hands into the cool water. * You splash the refreshing liquid on your face, and peer through the caked mud. A flash! Something stabs your mind, dim and getting brighter. Movement, shapes, colour! * Glistening water, and a reflection in the pool of a stunned face - your face! "I can see! I can see!" A miracle! *

You turn around, overwhelmed by joy and gratitude. Share with Jesus your feelings at this time. *

Now imagine yourself going home to the family who have cast you out to beg. What is their reaction? What happens next in your life? *

Bring your meditation time to a close, and gradually return yourself to the present.

Personal and Group Reflection

Give each person a piece of blank paper. Ask them to write words or phrases which express something of their feelings, thoughts and responses during the meditation in the form of a free verse poem. Allow at least five minutes for this.

Invite people to find a new partner who had the opposite role in the meditation. Each person will ask the other the questions below, allowing one person to answer all the questions before swapping roles.

These questions may be reproduced for use with the meditation in groups.

1. If you are willing, read your poem.

2a. Blind person:

- * How did you feel when you imagined your life as a blind person? What feelings or longings were there?
- * What was your initial reaction to Jesus' coming? How did you picture Jesus as a person?
- * How did you respond to Jesus' touch? What did you sense? What did you feel?
- * Tell us about your sight coming. Were you excited or afraid? What did you see?
- * What did you say to Jesus afterwards? How did you feel?
- * Focus again on your feelings at the start of the meditation when you were blind. What situation in your life at present comes closest to producing similar feelings in you? What causes these feelings?
- * What is your image or experience of God in relation to this situation? Close or distant? Loving or fearful? How does this affect your prayer or lack of prayer about this situation?
- * What would Jesus do for you in this present 'blindness'? What will be the consequence for your life?

2b. Jesus figure:

- * How did you feel when you first saw the blind person?
- * What was the attitude behind the words to the disciple? annoyance? rebuke? encouragement? proclamation? How did it feel to be the person saying this?
- * How did you feel reaching out to heal the blind person? What were you seeking to communicate through your touch? Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable? confident or questioning?
- * Describe how you experienced God's healing power flowing through you to the blind person.
- * How did you feel to see the blind person regain their sight? happy? surprised? confident? thankful?
- * Who in your present life is the closest to representing the blind person to you? What is their 'blindness' or need?
- * How do you feel about re-presenting Christ to them? confident or hesitant? Why? What is your image or experience of God in relation to this situation? Close or distant? Loving or fearful? How does this affect your prayer or lack of prayer about this situation?

* What would Christ's healing touch through you mean for this person? How would it happen? What would you need to do to convey it? What would they need to do to receive it?

3. Pray for one another in pairs, asking for freedom from `blindness' and freedom and strength to be agents of healing and hope for those who are `blind'.

Closing prayer

Sing together a song or hymn with the themes of freedom and light.

Share prayers of praise and thanksgiving for the freedom Christ has brought to your lives.

Read aloud Romans 3:22-24.

As a prayer of intercession, invite people to name aloud people or groups of people experiencing `blindness' of some kind.

Finish by reading aloud this prayer:

*Lord Jesus Christ, you have made us your own.
We have felt your healing touch,
we know your liberating love,
we are giddy with joy at seeing the colours of God's new commonwealth.
Send us to bring the news of this freedom to your world.
In the name of Christ. Amen.*

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