

For the Journey

March 12/26 - Rev. Dave Crawford.



“We must work the works of of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’ When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him, ‘Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam.’ Then he went and washed and came back able to see.” - John 9:4-7.

Sometime in 2004 a sewer pipe broke just outside the walls of the Jerusalem’s Old City. As work crews dug into the area in order to repair the damage, they came upon a set of steps, ancient steps, buried for centuries. The Greek Orthodox Church owned the land where this discovery was made and unfortunately access was denied until the property was purchased in 2023. Archaeologists were then brought in and before too long determined this was the sight of the Pool of Siloam, built in the 8th century B.C. by Israelite King Hezekiah.

Beyond a shadow of a doubt this is also the body of water, perhaps two acres in width and breadth (approximated in the illustration above), where Jesus healed the man born blind (John 9:1-41).

Today the Pool of Siloam excavation site is perhaps the most exciting archeological project in Jerusalem, its allure magnified by the fact that it's connected to another recent archeological discovery, the Pilgrimage Road, at least two thousand years old, connecting the Pool area with the Temple. It is believed that Jewish worshippers would ritually purify themselves in the Pool of Siloam before walking up the Road and into the Temple.

When Jesus heals the man born blind the religious authorities react badly. Territorialism seems to be front and centre as repeatedly the Pharisees object to a miracle being performed on the sabbath. Grace unleashed isn't necessarily grace welcomed. Oddly, similar reluctance to celebrate new archeological discoveries which scientifically back up the biblical witness, was demonstrated by the Greek Orthodox Church between 2004 and 2023. As the former blind man exclaims to his critics after Jesus' miracle, "It is an astonishing thing!"

Nonetheless this amazing story from John's Gospel provides numerous lessons, not the least of which is Jesus' proclamation in verses 35-39 that he is the Son of God. The Pharisees, however, to the end insist on the authority of their own special status, the importance of established hierarchy, and their need to be in control. Their view of Yahweh is narrowly defined, doctrinally rigid. Do we ever seek to box in the the work of God? Restrict God's potential activity in our lives and the lives of others? If so, isn't it really like trying to catch the wind with our outstretched arms? The Creator can't be contained within our creedal formulas, our denominational red lines, our unspoken congregational rules. God desires our liberation, renewal, and rebirth. The man born blind knew it. May we remember it.

True story of a recent convert to Jesus who was approached by an unbelieving friend:

"So you have been converted to Christ?"

"Yes"

“Then you must know a great deal about Him. Tell me, what country was he born in?”

“I don’t know.”

“What was his age when he died?”

“I don’t know.”

“How many sermons did he preach?”

“I don’t know.”

“You certainly know very little for a man who claims to be converted to Christ.”

“You are right. I am ashamed at how little I know about him. But this much I know: three years ago I was an alcoholic mess. My family was falling to pieces; they dreaded the sight of me. But now I’m in recovery. I’ve given up alcohol. We are out of debt. Ours is a happy home again. My children eagerly await my return home each evening. All this Christ has done for me. Yes, I don’t know much about Jesus’ life. All I know is that he changed me, better me, saved me.”

- Michael Yaconelli, Messy Spirituality: God’s Annoying Love for Imperfect People, 2002.