

Day 17 Devotion

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We^l must work the works 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" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

John 9: 1-13

St. Simons Presbyterian is dipping its toes into the waters of a scary ocean. Every Wednesday, 25 church members gather on Zoom to discuss the book *Waking Up White* by Debby Irving. The book is an honest excavation of the author's own upbringing and re-evaluation of stories and stereotypes, of myths and half-truths woven into her life. Her honesty is contagious as she tenderly explores the ways her whiteness is in fact not a neutral, default programming that all other races should achieve to imitate.

Instead, she realizes with anger and grief the way her small and well-intentioned existence has been complicit in injustices much larger than she imagined. She refers to her whiteness (and her waking up to it) as the waters she has been swimming in, with little attention given to them. She, raised white, had the luxury of putting "race" in a box on a shelf to be someone else's problem. One of these Zoom discussions had us looking at her breakdown of systemic racism: (1) skin tone (2) favoritism (3) power. With such large, distant, and likely insurmountable issues of broken systems, one participant raised his hand to emphasize something the author said of herself: Despite all of the race workshops and diversity forums she had attended to solve *that* problem over *there* and to *fix* injustices, she really started to wake up when her gaze turned inward rather than outward. It was a shift that changed everything: Examine yourself. Do I have a role and some responsibility for the way I view the world? Absolutely.

Many of us are like the man in this scripture passage. Blind from birth. Was it his sins or his parents that made him so? Why the blame game? It is what it is: he is blind. And he wants to see. And he is in misery. In John's gospel, Jesus spits into the dirt, makes a paste of mud, and spreads it onto a blind man's eyes. To overcome our blindness, we may have to allow spittle on our eyeballs. Maybe it takes that to wake us up; to open eyes to wholeness and restoration. Maybe mud-spit is what it takes to humble ourselves, to shed our own assumptions, and exchange our flawed eyesight to see with God's eyes. Just like the blind man in John's gospel, it is worth it.

Rev. Kate Buckley, Saint Simons Presbyterian Church

Jesus, heal our eyes. Disrupt our assumptions and seep through the fault lines at the edges of our vision; break in through the barriers of our defenses that so precariously hold us into place. Shatter them as you would and in your timing. May we find awareness and new vision. And as we blink our eyes open, crusty from the mud, help us to stay gentle with ourselves. Show us how to see clearly, but without the cage of judgment and mistrust. Fill us with compassion and love for ourselves as we go about the hard work of honesty and growing. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

RESOURCE VIDEO: [Waking Up White with Debby Irving - Bing video](#)