



Thoughts on the Journey...

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In the mid 1990's, I went to a family wedding in Barquisimeto, Venezuela. After the extravagant wedding festivities, we left Barquisimeto and decided to travel through the Andes Mountains. While driving through the lower elevations, I began to see a stark contrast from the city where we had been to where we were now. As we drove along the rough roads, overcrowded pick-up trucks would stop to pick up field workers who labored in the sugar cane fields. These workers walked miles from their homes, and if lucky, would get a ride part of the way. With each mile we traveled, the poverty became more obvious.

Driving along the road I saw what looked like a dark pile of *something* up ahead. Slowing down to get a better look, I saw movement but still couldn't identify what I was trying to see. Finally, my eyes were clearly fixed on the scene. As my car rolled passed, I could hardly believe my eyes.

There, in the middle of a muddy field, was a pile of tires, a rope strung between two trees with a dark plastic tarp, 3 mix-matched chairs with chipped paint, and a small wooden table. I strained to see if there was a solid structure, but there was not. In addition, there were four people positioned at the site: a grown woman sitting in one of the chairs holding her baby, one toddler, and a school aged little boy. The baby and the smaller child were wearing no clothes and the little boy wore a pair of ripped shorts. It became clear to me that this was their home.

This was just one of many images that pulled at my heart and opened my eyes. Growing up in the United States, I was blind to abject poverty. But on this day and for the rest of my time in Venezuela, I became acquainted with the extreme conditions with which other people in the world have to live. Suddenly all the things I usually complain about became trite and insignificant. It was as though I had gained a new vision and became more acutely aware of what I had been blind to in the past.

In the Gospel of John this week, we see his account of the man born blind being healed by Jesus. As Jesus and his disciples were walking, they passed by a man who was blind from birth. His dis-

ciples asked Jesus, who sinned, this man or his parents? Jesus answered them,

“Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him.”

Jesus then smeared clay with his saliva and wiped it on the eyes of the blind man, then told him, “Go wash in the Pool of Siloam”. After he washed his eyes, The blind man could then see.

Once the blind man was healed, the Pharisees began to question the blind man. Even though he vouched for Jesus as his healer, the Pharisees doubted and once again found fault with Jesus because he healed on the Sabbath. In John's gospel, it points to Jesus as a Healer and the Light of the World. It also contrasts physical blindness that was healed and spiritual blindness that was not healed. Even though Jesus healed the man born blind, the Pharisees were so fixed on discrediting Jesus, that they were blind to the very Messiah they awaited – the very Messiah who stood before them.

Blindness comes in different ways and cannot always be healed. Sometimes our selfishness blinds us; sometimes it's our fears. Jesus' answer makes it clear that in this case of the blind man, his affliction wasn't because of someone's sin, but because God had a larger purpose in it, that the work of God might be displayed. Like the poverty I witnessed in Venezuela, God's hand was at work transforming my vision of the world and making a difference in my life of faith.

These challenging times can be an opportunity for us to let the work of God be done in us. In addition to it being Lent, the corona virus has abruptly transformed our hectic lifestyles in a matter of days. Like it or not, we are more isolated and removed from the distractions that keep us from focusing on Christ. Instead of bemoaning the challenges we face, let's surrender ourselves to the Lord and allow him to heal all manner of blindness in us.