

# I Can See Clearly Now

John 9 : 1 - 41

Purpose: To inspire a spirit- inspired sense of purposefulness that enables folk individually and communally to capture a renewed vision of the With-God life.

Does the name Johnny Nash mean anything to you? That's one of those generationally loaded questions! You probably need to be a baby boomer to know the name Johnny Nash. And if you are a baby boomer you probably don't need me to remind you that he was a popular music singer and song writer in the 1970's with several popular hits to his credit, but none greater than of his number one hit single, "I can see clearly now the rain is gone." It replaced Chuck Berry's "My Ding-a-Ling" and was replaced by the Temptations singing Papa Was a Rolling Stone."

If you're a baby boomer you may just be humming to yourself:

I can see clearly now the rain is gone. / I  
can see all obstacles in my way. / Gone are  
the dark clouds that had me blind. / It's

gonna be a bright (bright) / bright (bright)  
sunshiny day.

If you're not a baby boomer, a gen x-er perhaps, you might have a hazy memory of Jimmy Cliff singing the same song in the movie "Cool Running" which told the story of the debut performance of the Jamaican bob sled team in the 1988 Winter Olympics. It was pretty popular towards the end of the last century as well.

If you're even younger, the closest you might have come was the short performance by the Three Blind Mice in the "Far Far Away Idol" competition n Shrek Version 2.

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I rather like the idea of the Three Blind Mice singing "I can see clearly now." I think it puts me in a really good frame of mind to think about those multiple stories that make up the gospel reading this morning.

Of course there is the story of the blind man. Surely he has something to sing about! He has been blind from birth, but now he really can see clearly! Surely for him this is a moment of great celebration. Even though he is the centre of a theological controversy, his life has

suddenly gained a new direction not just because he has received the miracle of physical sight from Jesus. For him the reorientation of his life goes much deeper. He has encountered the Jesus and like the woman at the well in Samaria, his life has been transformed in this new relationship. He can never be the same again.

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Then there are the stories of the theological controversies. The first is the theological controversy of the disciples. Perhaps “controversy” is the wrong word for it. They are intrigued by the blind man and they want to know whose fault it is. Whose sin was responsible for his affliction? Is he blind because of something he did? An intriguing possibility since they apparently already know that he has been blind from birth. Or is it the fault of his parents?

Jesus is not interested in their blame game. He is much more interested in the productive potential of the moment. Others may see this blind man as an object of curiosity, but Jesus sees him as one in whom the mighty works of God can be revealed. He spits on the ground, spreads the mud on the man’s eyes. He washes in the

pool of Siloam as Jesus instructs him and now he can see.

But what of the disciples? Can they see clearly now? Or are they still blinded by an abstract theological controversy that makes the plight of the person less important than the game of blame game that they've been playing?

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There are none so blind as those who will not see!

The second theological controversy involves the Pharisees to whom the blind man is taken. They have a real conundrum on their hands! Since Jesus takes a less than high view of the Sabbath, surely he must be a sinner. On the other hand, since the blind man can now see, something else must be going on? "Since," they reason, "God doesn't listen to sinners, how can this man be healed."

It really is a conundrum and one that defies the only logic available to them. Unless they have eyes to see they cannot embrace Jesus, the light of the world. They do what you or I might do in the midst of an

irreconcilable dilemma. They put it in the too hard basket. It's easier to cast the problem aside. So they drive the man who was blind yet can see clearly now away.

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As I say: I rather like the idea of the Three Blind Mice singing "I can see clearly now." I think it puts me in a really good frame of mind to think about today's gospel. I like to think theologically. I believe that theological reflection can help us discern God's call upon our lives, but am I really more like one of the three blind mice thinking I can see clearly when all the time I am really the one who is blind.

And what about you? How clearly are you seeing things at the moment?

"I am the light of the world," Jesus tells the disciples in the middle of their blame game. I came to help people see. "I came for judgement," Jesus tells the Pharisees. I came to show people a new way of seeing. If you want to discern a new vision for your lives; if you want to discover new hope for the future; if you want to see

clearly now: you'll need to look at things in the light of who I am and what I am offering in the world.

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Now I believe the teaching of the creeds that Jesus will come in glory to judge the living and the dead. But I don't think that's the judgement that Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees about in today's gospel. Instead I think he wants to hold out to them and to his disciples the possibility of seeing things in a new way.

The judgement in this passage is a judgement between seeing clearly the divine possibilities that Jesus comes into the world to reveal. The judgement that is being held out in this passage is the judgement that the man who used to be blind makes when he says, "Lord, I believe," and worships Jesus. That is the judgement before the disciples and the Pharisees and it is the judgement that we must make today as well.

There are none so blind as those who will not see.

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From time to time, I have reason to glance at the Oxley-Darra congregation governance document. Right at the

top, under the words Oxley-Darra Uniting Church, are these words:

Growing in Christ

Showing Christ

Going Christ's Way

Now to be honest I have no idea where those words come from, but they sound like visionary words to me. Do you notice how centred in Jesus those words are? Growing in Christ! That's sounds like the developing Christian maturity theme that emerged through the Visioning Day. Showing Christ! That sounds like become a visible witness within our community and the world of the compassion and mercy of Jesus. Going Christ's way! That sounds like Christian obedience, fulfilling our missionary purpose in the world as we pursue those things that God wills for the world and its peoples.

Visionary words! But are we a visionary people? In the midst of busy lives, even in the midst of busy Christian lives, even busy Christian lives lived in active day-by-day service within a particular Christian congregation, even as leaders within that congregation, we can lose our sense of strategic vision. We can lose sight of those core values that make us who we are and propel us into

the future. We can do that as individuals and we can do that as a community.

The bottom line is: I can be like one of the Three Blind Mice in the Shrek 2 movie Far Far Away Idol competition. And so can you!

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But this is the place and this is the time. Here and now Christ waits to break into our experience: To change our minds, to change our lives, to change our ways; Here and now Christ waits to lift the veil from our eyes and show us the world in a new light.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus says, “I am the light of the world.” The obstacles in our path are incidental. Spectacular opportunities arise in a community of faith that seeks clarity of vision through him.

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<sup>1</sup> Quote with adaptations from Terry C Falla, “Be Our Freedom Lord”, Openbook Publishers, 1994. Page 26.