

“Don’t be blind, see the obvious!” John 9.

Grace and peace to all of you from God our Father and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

For today’s meditation we have this event from Jesus ministry, where He healed the blind man and this healing caused such a controversy in Jerusalem. Such a strange controversy as we’ll see in a minute.

We’ve been talking recently about the fact that we can’t argue or persuade anyone to become a Christian. This is not one of decisions that we could make after reasonable evaluation is done.

The problem with becoming a Christian doesn’t lie in realm of reason, as if the Christian worldview wasn’t reasonable. It is the most coherent worldview among all, in fact, the only one that’s corresponds to reality.

So the problem is not in the realm of reason, but rather in the realm of will. Our wills and not our reason are masters of our lives. Our will determines how we use our reason and what we accept to be true. We actually know how it works. First we do what we want, then we use our reason to explain, to rationalize why we did it. To justify our actions.

Our deepest problem is that we can’t change our wills, our hearts on our own. Only the Holy Spirit can do it. Thus someone’s conversion into Christianity is a miracle, the work of the Holy Spirit, God’s work through the proclamation of the Gospel about Jesus.

Today’s Gospel reading so vividly illustrates it once more. So let’s take a look at John’s account about this healing and what controversies it caused. Jesus and His disciples were going through Jerusalem and saw a man who was blind from birth.

Jesus disciples displayed the same kind of insight about the blind man as Job’s friends did about Job’s miseries. If he was blind, then that was either because of his sins or his parent’s sins. That’s how we often think. ‘None of them’, said Jesus, but so “that the works of God might be displayed in him.” (John 9:3)

So He did. Just took a mud, put on the blind man's eyes and sent him to wash it off in the pool of Siloam. Whatever strange was Jesus approach to healing this man's blindness, it worked. He came back seeing. For a first time in his live.

Some theologians have noticed the connection of this healing with the creation of man. In the beginning God the Creator formed man from dust, and now the same God in flesh, used dust to restore his broken creature.

As we can imagine this kind of miracle could not go unnoticed. Those who used to see the blind man begging wondered, - is this the same man? They couldn't believe that the same man could see, even as he himself kept reassuring them: 'Yes. It is me.'

How could this be that someone who was blind from birth now sees? People were so uneasy that they brought this man to Pharisees as their religious leaders to see what they would say. After hearing what has happen there was a division among Pharisees.

Some of them said: "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" (John 9:16) We can see that both groups tried to explain what had just happen, but they both approached to the question from different perspectives.

The first group took as the bases for their reasoning the Sabbath laws. Their logic went like this. 'Every man that is from God does keep the Sabbath. This man, who healed the blind man didn't keep the Sabbath, at least not according to their understanding. Consequently, this man is not from God.'

Other group took as the bases for their reasoning the miracle that Jesus undeniably performed. Their logic went like this. 'Only a man of God could do such a miracle. Jesus did this miracle, no one could deny it. Consequently, Jesus had to be a man of God.' How to come to consensus?

Let's ask the man himself. What do you think about Jesus? "He is a prophet", the man replied. But this wasn't the answer the Pharisees were looking for. People can't change their wills. Even if evidence compels them. The Pharisees just keep looking for a way to explain this situation according their own believes.

Recognizing that the man now sees and that it definitely is a sign, they still were not willing to admit that it has to be a sign from God. But how could you get around something like this? If you think hard, you can find a way.

Let's ask the man's parents, may be this man wasn't blind from birth? So they called the parents, but all they could say was: "We know that *this is* our son and that *he was* born blind. That's all we know. About anything else ask him." (John 9:20-21)

By that time, as Jesus had got more and more followers, there was already the tendency to exclude from synagogue those who would confess that Jesus was the Christ.

The man's parents were afraid to confess what was obvious, that Jesus had done something that no one had ever done. He had given sight to the man who was blind from birth. Thus also the parents couldn't help the Pharisees to explain away this Jesus miracle.

What else they could do? Let's confess that Jesus is the Christ? No, by no means! Let's go back to the man himself once more. "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner."

What they meant by 'give glory to God' was probably something along these lines... 'stop fooling around, you know that we know that this man has to be a sinner, so just admit it, for you know that God is on our side.'

But this man wouldn't stop fooling around. 'I don't know whether He is a sinner, but I know that I who was born blind, can now see.' Thus the Pharisees were stuck in this situation.

It was so obvious, so obvious to everyone that God had just done a great miracle, but they didn't want to acknowledge it. As we spoke. When it comes to admitting that Jesus is true God, reason is not of a great help.

Miracles could have happened before your eyes, something you can see, prove, test, but... if your will is against God, nothing helps. You wouldn't accept the truth, whatever obvious it is.

So the Pharisees just went on: "Tell us once more, what did this Jesus do?" It was enough even for the blind man. He replied with such a fine irony. "I have told you

already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” Do you want to become Jesus disciples?

That didn’t go well. ‘We? Jesus disciples? No! We are disciples of Moses, we know that God spoke through Moses, but about this one we don’t know anything.’ Really?

Jesus had been teaching, healing, performing miracles for few years, the Pharisees know all of this, they were present in so many occasions when Jesus did it... but still, if your will is against God, even the obvious won’t change your mind.

The healed man replied. ‘That’s amazing. You don’t know about Him, but we know that God doesn’t listen to sinners, only those who are true believers, and this man Jesus has done something that no one since the world begun had even heard about. How could He do it, if He wasn’t from God?’

Simple logic. Reasonable. Undeniable. Based on evidence. Many witnesses. The Pharisees should have believed, right? They should have admitted that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Right? But what did they do in face of such an obvious truth?

They did exactly what people often do when they are faced with Biblical truth. It’s difficult to deny the reality of power and wisdom of God the Creator, just look at creation, it sings about it.

Or the reality of our sinfulness, - just listen or read the news and they will give you persuasive testimony. Or undeniable historicity of Biblical events, the Gospel of Jesus. But if you can’t deny the message, you can try to deny one who shares it. Let’s discredit the messenger, then you can easily refuse to listen to the message.

That what the Pharisees said: “You, you were born in utter sin, and you would teach us? How do you dare?” And they cast him out. That simple. Done. So often people think that this way they could get rid of the truth of God.

This event illustrates so well what we’ve been talking about. You can’t reason anyone into Christian faith. It doesn’t matter what evidence, what proofs you have. Because unless the Holy Spirit has changed our hearts, they will resist to very idea that Jesus is God in flesh, who came to save us from our sins and to give us eternal life in His presence.

Whatever are evidence, they don't matter for a heart that is not renewed by the Holy Spirit. But there is no other way to know God, except in Christ Jesus. If you know Jesus, you know true God, you know what is His attitude to you, how much He has done, is doing and has prepared for you.

When the healed man was cast out by Pharisees, Jesus approached Him again and asked: "Do you believe in the Son of man?" Please, pay attention to this small detail. Who approached whom? Initially and also now.

Was it the blind man? No. Who was it? Yes, Jesus Himself. God Himself came to the man. He revealed who He was. Then in response the man confessed: "Yes, I believe", and he worshipped Jesus.

Once you see what is so obvious from this account, that Jesus is someone very special, that He did things which only God could do, you can't come to other conclusion than - He indeed is true God, the Creator and Redeemer of the world.

Besides, He is not only someone very powerful, but He is the one who comes searching for us. For you. It happens the same way today. We are not looking for Jesus. He comes looking for us, for you, willing to heal you and to help you see the truth.

Then Jesus said: "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." (John 9:39) What is this? At a first sight these words may appear in stark contrast to what Jesus said elsewhere.

For example in John 3: "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (John 3:17) Which of them is it? There are no contradictions.

Of course, Jesus came into this world to save us, to save you, to reveal you the truth about us and about God. To help you see things as they are. That we all are fallen creatures, rebellious against our Creator, heading towards eternal separation from God the Father.

That regardless of our attitude to Him, God Himself values you so highly that He gave His life so that only you could live with Him here and in eternity. But only someone whom God the Holy Spirit has opened eyes can see this truth.

But Jesus does this other thing as well. His coming blinds and judges. It blinds those who don't want to see what is so obvious. Who don't want to see the truth. Who think that they know everything, that they are the ultimate authority.

People who are far from God and rebellious against Him sometimes say: "Prove me that God exists, then I'll believe." Indeed? We have the Bible full of examples of Jesus proving that He indeed was the Son of God, true God Himself.

How many different signs He did? Cleansing of the temple, turning wine into water, rebuking the storm, healing thousands... thousands. Raising the dead before the eyes of hundreds of eyewitnesses. In this account, healing the blind. What good it did to those who didn't want to believe? No good at all.

The Pharisees who didn't want to accept the truth tried to find a rational way to deny that Jesus is what He claimed to be – true God and our Saviour. When they could deny what was obvious, they resorted to anger and after offending the healed man, cast him out.

Most of us probably have had similar experiences. We do our best to share the Gospel, but in return we could receive unbelief and even rejection. It is how it is. We can't change it. It happened even with Jesus. We can just pray for the help of the Holy Spirit and to keep sharing what Jesus has commanded us to share.

And our message is so good, so obvious, so corresponding to the reality. Sin and our sinfulness, the brokenness of this world and our need for Saviour are undeniable. Everyone can come to this conclusion using their reason.

Jesus coming in flesh, His miracles, His death and resurrection are so historical that there is no way to get around them. Jesus has come to give us sight, to reveal the truth. But first we need to admit that we are blind. That we need Him.

Only then we can rejoice and confess 'I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord.' Let's pray for the help of the Holy Spirit, that He would continue to enlighten us, and that He would use us and our gifts to open eyes of many more who are still in darkness.

Amen.