

The blind man sees and the disciples don't. It's a miracle story with a deeply symbolic meaning summed up perhaps in not letting the blind man see at all - they would rather he remained silent and didn't disturb their sweet following of Jesus ignorant still of its full meaning as laid bare in the predictions already made of his impending passion. But the blind man already sees more clearly than they do, recognising Jesus as Son of David – a leader of Israel, a redeemer, one to make Israel whole again – and as Jesus responds to this recognition so the disciples change their tune – still blind followers of a way they do not understand, still clinging perhaps to Jesus as a restorer not of Israel's wholeness or holiness but as a restorer of Israel's greatness as in the time of David, the one to throw off the Roman yoke, and bring greatness to them also. The blind man in contrast throws off his cloak, all the wealth he has, and jumps up to meet Jesus, already then on the way to resurrection, and Jesus responds by restoring to him not his physical sight but his dignity as a human being, one made in the image of God and able to answer for it, to be treated as an equal, one who is responsive to God, one who doesn't need to be told what to do but worthy of that question that God poses for each one of us "What do you want me to do for you?" This is God at our service, offering us the gift of eternal life, the life that restores us not only to God but to one another and to ourselves - the gift of wholeness, integrity, being one. In asking to see again this blind man who already sees so well is revealing the innocence of his wholeness, his ignorance of his own holiness, the completeness he already has in Christ, the faith which now restored his sight but paradoxically will also take him further down the road of Christ's suffering. It's a way of seeing that brings both joy and pain, the joy at the beauty of it all, this amazing creation which ennoble even the least of God's creatures and the pain of its incompleteness, reflecting our own, the necessary suffering of evolution one might say and the unnecessary suffering of sin. We cannot truly see without compassion and com- passion is necessarily painful – we see and feel the loss of others; we love. This is the way the blind man has chosen to follow. It's our baptism too into the life and death and resurrection of Christ, not apart from this world but through it, in all its imperfection. As the blind man will probably find out only too soon as he gets to know his companions. So there is a sense in which he must become blind again – blind to their faults and failings : love at first sight.

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