

-Longtime theologian, Climate Change Activist, and founder of the organization 350.org came out with a book a few years ago called "Eaarth". (Except it's spelled E-A-A-R-T-H). The book suggests the idea that many in the work of Climate Change have already known: we are living on essentially a new planet. The whole notion of "saving the Earth" from a Climate Change "that is coming" is a complete misnomer because Climate Change is already here. McKibben acknowledges that the Earth our grandparents and even our parents lived on has different weather patterns, different migration patterns of animals, different diseases, different temperature swings, and different water scarcity issues. It's a new Earth with a different set of rules, so we might as well acknowledge this fact and be able to live our lives as such.

-In a lot of ways this shift is quite scary and shocking. Maybe we don't want to believe it or we actively resist the very idea of changing our patterns of life to match a new world. In truth, many Climate Change activists have, in my opinion, relied too heavily on fear based change: the world is going to be hotter, sicker, and more extreme, so you gotta change. Not very appealing

-Maybe it's time to see our reality differently. Not as much of a total catastrophe, but an opportunity. I think this is where faith and our story in the Gospel of John can help us.

- "As Jesus walked along, he saw a man *blind from birth*." This is really important because it separates this story from other Jesus healing stories in other gospels. Perhaps it brings up for you the memory of a similar story in Matthew where Jesus heals a man, but his vision doesn't seem to come into focus and he sees people as "trees". This hints at the very important fact that the man in this other story had seen before because he knew what people and trees looked like. Jesus was restoring his sight. Not the case in John: in this particular story, this is a man whose eyes had never worked for his entire life (blind from birth). So why is this important?

-Well, why was he blind from birth? Jewish tradition and thinking is very clear: God does not create "flawed things". Everything God creates is good. Thus, there is a strong emphasis in ancient Judaism that when someone is born this way (as is told in this story) someone must have sinned. Someone must have done something wrong! Maybe it was this man's parents, or maybe it was even the man himself in his mother's womb (we have writings from Pharisees and Jewish teachers from this time period that even acknowledge prenatal sin). Whatever it was, this was what was generally accepted.....except by Jesus. "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him." God's work isn't defined by old rules and the Jewish leaders don't know how to respond.

-In earlier chapters of John, Jesus makes several statements: "I am the light of the world", "I give you living water." In this story, these statements come together in an action: the creation of a new creation. Jesus witnesses and shares God's powerful new creation with this man, and it's shocking.

-In the old creation, this man was beholden to “sin” as an explanation for why he wasn’t “whole”. There was no room for him. In God’s new creation through Jesus Christ, this man is whole again, can see and witness to a new set of rules.

-Following the “grilling” and angry confrontation by the Jewish leadership, this man stands face to face with Jesus and says: “I believe”. He didn’t understand all of it, he didn’t quite know what was going to happen next in this new creation, but despite this he confidently stated his faith: “I believe”. “I believe in this new creation”

-Friends, I believe we can collectively put ourselves into this former blind man's shoes as we figure out our way on this new Earth. Maybe it’s us who are stepping into this new creation, and it’s a creation that doesn’t have to be bound by the old rules. Yes, there are those who are shocked (like the Jewish leadership) and who are trying to explain our mild winters, dead coral reefs, and the increase in drought and disease with “old rule” explanations. But there is another way.

-A new creation has begun. Opportunities to witness God’s love and power are now possible which were not before. So what is our task?

-Maybe we don’t understand it all, maybe we are still scared and uncomfortable with what is going to happen, maybe we have doubts, but we can still stand in front of our God and say: “I believe”. I believe in God’s work of love and justice for ALL creation. I believe in a savior that accepts me for who I am. I believe in beauty and mystery that make life rich. I believe in Jesus Christ and the power to instill in all of us a new creation. Amen.