



# Simple Gifts

Words to Inspire the Spirit

IMMANUEL CHURCH-ON-THE-HILL

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## Mud in Your Eye

By Richard Glassco

“As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him.’.... When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him, ‘Go wash in the Pool of Siloam’ (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.” (John 9:1-3,6-7)

Who wants mud in their eyes? Nobody.

Mud in your eyes makes it harder to see, not easier. And mud made by someone spitting on the ground? That’s even grosser. Spitting on the ground in front of someone is a classic gesture of disrespect, often expressing racism in its most blatant form. Yet, that is how Jesus healed a man blind from birth.

So many of us have been blind from our birth. Whether it is our sin, or our parents', or our ancestors', or our society's sin is not the question. The sin of structural racism is there, and our immersion in it has made us blind to it.

Most of us have grown up with a privileged place in American society that gives advantages not available to people of color. We are just now beginning to see how pervasive and unfair those advantages are.

Now we are beginning to realize that we have been blind, and we wish to be able to see. We read and hear news stories every day about insensitivity, distrust, and unequal treatment of minorities. Our realization of how our nation grew up exploiting Native Americans, immigrants, and enslaved people disturbs, disgusts, and deeply unsettles us. These stories are like mud in our eyes. Yet they are beginning to help us to see more clearly.

Let us pray.

Lord, we have been blind from our birth to some of the sins of our society toward members of your human family, and we have profited from white privilege that gives us advantages denied to others. We pray for forgiveness, and we pray for economic, social, and environmental justice for all people. We pray that the mud in our eyes may be blessed by you and your Holy saliva, that we may see more clearly, and that God's work may be revealed in our lives. Amen.

*Endnote:* I created and offered this meditation and prayer to our *Sacred Ground* discussion group. [Sacred Ground](#) is a new, sensitive, and prayerful resource offered to congregations as part of the Episcopal Church's [Becoming Beloved Community](#) efforts. It is a film- and readings-based dialogue series on race that is grounded in faith and provides space for difficult, but respectful, dialogue on race and racism.

Our dialogue circle of a dozen parishioners from Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill and a mentor have found the readings, films, videos, and ensuing discussions to be deeply challenging and thought-provoking. We hope and pray other parishioners will be inspired to consider forming their own additional *Sacred Ground* small group dialogue circles.