

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, told a story on himself. He was waiting for a taxi outside the railway station in Paris. When the taxi pulled up, he put his suitcase in it and then got in the taxi. As he was about to tell the taxi-driver where he wanted to go, the driver asked him: "*Where can I take you, Mr. Doyle?*"

Doyle was astounded. He asked the driver if he knew him by sight. The driver said: "*No Sir, I have never seen you before.*" Doyle was puzzled and asked him how he knew he was Arthur Conan Doyle.

The driver replied: "*This morning's paper had a story that you were on vacation in Marseilles. This is the taxi-stand where people who return from Marseilles always wait. Your skin color tells me you have been on vacation. The ink-spot on your right index finger suggests to me that you are a writer. Your clothing is very English, and not French. Adding up all those pieces of information, I deduce that you are Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.*"

Doyle exclaimed, "*This is truly amazing. You are a real-life counter-part to my fictional, Sherlock Holmes.*"

"*There is one other thing,*" the driver said.

"*What is that?*" Doyle asked. "*Your name is on the front of your suitcase.*"

Some people just naturally seem better at seeing things others might overlook; some people need an eye-opener to help them really see.

There's a woman who helped to establish a halfway house for women who are recovering drug addicts. In a lot of ways, you would never expect her to be involved with such work. She is even-tempered, gentle, and articulate.

But something happened a few years ago that caused her to see the world in a new way.

She was a graduate school student in Pittsburgh, looking for a part-time job. A newspaper listed an administrative position with a soup kitchen. That looked interesting, so she clipped it and prepared for the interview. On the day of her interview, she put on a dark blue business suit, put together a manila folder full of resumes and references, and clipped back her hair.

Arriving a few minutes before noon, she saw the sign: "East End Cooperative Ministry." She knocked on the door. Someone inside said, "*It's unlocked.*" She went in, only to find a long line of people in front of her. Disappointment washed over her. Then she realized it was lunch time. The people in the line weren't there for the interview, they were waiting for soup.

She grew nervous as she looked at the people in line. Some of them, in turn, looked at her. She felt self-conscious about the way she was dressed. Apparently others began to sense her anxiety. A woman in a moth-eaten sweater smiled and tried to make conversation. "*Is this your first time here?*"

"*Yes, it is.*"

"*Don't worry,*" said the lady in the sweater, "*it gets easier.*"

"*The scales fell from my eyes that day,*" reflected the young woman. "*I went there looking for a job, and that woman thought I was there for soup. As far as she knew, the world had been as cruel to me as it was to her. But in the kindest way she could, she welcomed me as a fellow human being. She saw me as someone equally in need,*

which I was and still am. I didn't realize it at the time, but that was the day when God began to cure my blindness." Looking around the halfway house, she smiled and said, *"You see all of these wonderful things God is doing here? They began when God gave us eyes to see where Jesus was leading us."*

The gospel story today really asks us to notice three kinds of blindness. The first blindness is represented by Bartimaeus. It was a literal blindness. The second kind of blindness in the story relates to the disciples. When Jesus began his way into Jerusalem, he told the twelve of the dreadful things that would soon befall all of them. But they understood none of these things; thus the disciples suffered from a kind of blindness. They loved Jesus passionately, but they did not understand him. They were spiritually blind to the meaning of the events that were happening around them.

This blindness effected their behavior. Look what they did. They tried to keep this poor beggar from coming to Jesus. They tried to keep young children from seeing him. We expect such actions from the Pharisees and the Sadducees. But these were the disciples--the men who genuinely loved him. It was not until the stone was rolled away on Easter Sunday morning that the disciples were really able to see Jesus. It was then that they became apostles instead of disciples.

Yet, there is a third kind of blindness that is far worse. It is the blindness we can suffer. Bartimaeus lacked eyes. The disciples lacked knowledge. But we have both and we still fail to see. We don't see the precious gift of life itself.

We don't see the blessing of physical health until a severe illness strikes. We don't see our loved ones, until we are on the verge of losing them. We take life for granted, until a diagnosis of terminal cancer comes in. Then days, indeed, hours become precious to us. All of those worries that bogged down our lives now seem so trivial and minor to us. We are blind to the preciousness of life, until it is threatened or curbed for us.

In Thornton Wilder's memorable play "Our Town," there is an unforgettable. Emily – the central character - has died. In heaven she is given special permission to come back to earth for just a brief time. She has arrived at the graveyard of Grover's Corner where the story takes place. She can experience one day her life as before, but this time with the knowledge of her impending death. The day that she chooses to live over is her twelfth birthday. Her mother is pre-occupied with preparations for the celebration. Her father returns home from work exhausted. Only Emily is aware of the few precious moments now remaining. She pleads: *Momma, just look at me once as though you really saw me.*" But her mother pays no attention. Emily can only relive the day; she cannot change anything. She goes to her father and tries to talk to him, but he is busy reading the paper and pays no attention. Finally she can stand it no longer and she finally cries out: *"I can't go on. It is going too fast. We don't have enough time to look at one another. I didn't realize what was going on. I never noticed it. Oh earth, you are too wonderful for anyone to realize you."*

And then she turns to the stage manager, another key figure in the play, and says: "*Do any human beings ever recognize life while they live it--every, every minute.*"

We don't really see the life around us. We don't see the needs of others. We are like the disciples. We are too busy to stop and to care, and to be a friend. There are so many lonely people in the world. There are so many sick people in the world. There are so many lost souls in the world. And yet, somehow we don't see it all.

We don't see the preciousness of life. We don't see the blessings that we have. Saddest of all, we don't see how important Jesus is to that life. Nothing, nothing is so important to us in life as that, but we don't see it. And what possible excuse do we have.

We can't seem to get it through our heads and our hearts that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. It is he that is in control. He is the Lord of history. He came to make us whole and to perfect his good work within us and he is sufficient for our every need. He expects from us love and commitment. But so many times we can't we see that.

But for those of us who are blind there is hope; Jesus came to heal the blind. It happened to Bartimaeus. It happened the disciples. It can happen to us. How do we go about it? All that is necessary is that we cry out as did the blind beggar centuries ago: ***Master, I want to see.***