

500 years ago, St. Ignatius of Loyola, gave us a very helpful tool for enriching our prayer and spirituality. He taught that when we listen to the scriptures, especially the gospel stories, we can imagine ourselves present there – become one of the characters in the story; or imagine yourself as a bystander – Be There! Be with Jesus and let the Holy Spirit guide your meditation and give you inspiration. As I asked the Spirit to take me inside the story, all of a sudden I was the mama, the “Ima” in Aramaic – my son was the man born blind. In the gospels and particularly in John, when a character doesn’t have a name – it’s a clue - that character is each of us – you are the man born blind, you are the woman at the well, you are the beloved disciple! In my meditation, because he was my son, I gave him a name – Baruch –\*\*\*ironic, the neighbors thought because the name means Blessed! But they didn’t know my boy, they didn’t **see him** as God sees him. As the scripture says ‘people see outwardly, but the Lord looks into the heart.’ You see my boy, Baruch, a man now, 18 years old, though blind from birth, is amazing, he has a heart and a spirit SO full of courage, and So wise. He takes it all in – all that is happening around him. His hearing is so keen and he could tell from how people spoke, just what they were like. He could smell fear on people ... and arrogance too. Every day, he would leave our little home to go and beg, as was his right. He insisted on going alone – he knew exactly how many steps to the end of the path; turn right, how many steps to the main road; a left and 23 steps to his spot, where he sat with his cup to ask for alms – alms he gave to his father and me each night to help the 3 of us survive. Baruch would leave early each morning and after he was far enough away to not hear me, I would follow. I am a fearful woman, always afraid of many things, I worry about everything and I worry so much about what people think and how they judge me and my family. But I’m mostly afraid something would happen to my Baruch. I stand around the corner and watch him, amazed at his courage – I watch the tilt of his head as he listens to the passersby. It’s hard to tear myself away, but I need to leave him each day, and come back to do my chores.

Yesterday, a miracle has happened. A miracle, and yet I am still so afraid. Let me tell you. Baruch came running, RUNNING back to the house yesterday morning. As I looked up to see him, I saw Baruch LOOKING at me. Eyes no longer clouded, but shining clear and bright – “Ima, I am seeing you!” I almost fainted. He tells me of this Yeshua, you call him Jesus, who is, Baruch says, “the Son of Man!” – that is a special name we use for the Glorious One a title we use for the one we await. “Baruch slow down and tell me everything!”

“I heard a group coming, Ima ... and I heard the question I hate the most – in their hushed voices they think I can’t hear ‘Rabbi, who sinned? This man or his parents?’ I was filled with indignation and rage Ima, you and Abba are so good, so devoted to the synagogue and to Adonai. I was ready to stand up and curse them – But then, Ima, this extraordinary voice answers – and he answers loudly, to be sure that I heard him and everyone else heard him – “Neither he nor his parents sinned!” The anger I had felt turned to shock, and then joy and then I felt tears on my cheeks. As much from what he said, as the tender voice with which he spoke, and I felt he knew me. He says, "It is so the work of God would be visible in him!" In ME! Like you always say about me Ima – that I am a blessing and that I am blessed! and that you see Adonai in me. As he was speaking, I could tell he was coming near to me, and then he stooped down right next to me. I hear him spitting and scraping dirt. Then he asks me quietly if he might “anoint” my eyes with the clay he is making. I could feel the goodness in him, I could hear tenderness and love in his voice. “Yes, Rabbi,” for I felt nothing but trust. And he gently starts smearing the clay he has made over my eyes – Ima, I thought of Adonai forming a man out of clay and I felt Yeshua was fashioning a new me. He tells me, “Light is not so much - what you see directly, as that by which you see everything else.” (Richard Rohr)

He tells me, “I am your light Baruch, I am the Light of the World, by which you must see everything.” Then, he sends me, Ima – no one has ever sent me anywhere. You and Abba have always been too afraid to send me, except on my little journey to beg – and even then, sweet Ima, full of fear, you follow me. **He** sends me to wash at Siloam. By now there is a crowd around me and as I stand, they say ‘this way, this way,’ and I go to Siloam and wash; and as I wash the clay, the light enters my eyes and I am seeing – SEEING what I had only ever heard and felt. The group with me rushed me back to my begging spot.

But Yeshua wasn’t there anymore; though I had never seen him, I looked and looked. I kept shouting, “I can see, Rabbi Yeshua, I can see!” Then, Ima, men with angry voices crowded around me and people started saying I was lying and I wasn’t born blind. So, Ima, you must come with me, you must tell them!” And that was when I, Ima, remembered to be afraid. Oh my, oh my. But Baruch grabbed my hand and for the first time **he led me** out to the center of our town, where now there was a large crowd with many official looking men, and many I knew were religious leaders. I fear these ones the most, I fear their judgment, and my husband and I always do exactly what we are told. We pay our tithes to the synagogue and our taxes to the

temple. We follow the law exactly as they interpret and demand it. Even though they say we and our son are sinners. By this time someone had told my husband at his work what had happened and he was there with me. It was such a wonderful miracle, we should have been rejoicing, but all we can see is the anger of the elders and the leaders of our religion. All we can feel is their arrogant disdain for us. I am so afraid they are going to throw us out of the Synagogue – of the community in which we have lived our whole lives. They are furious about this Yeshua. I should have been seeing **what Yeshua did for my son**. I should have been bold and defiant in the face of their judgment. But I shook with fear, as did my husband. All we could do was admit *Baruch was our son* and *that he had been born blind* and so, they turned on him. But he was not afraid at all! He saw them in the Light of Yeshua! He stood tall; he spoke his truth to these hypocritical religious leaders. He spoke of the Almighty with wisdom and understanding. He knew they had never accepted him, and he wasn't about to beg for their acceptance now. My brave son proclaimed what he could see clearly, that Yeshua was God's prophet, a healer with God's power; and that he wanted to be Yeshua's disciple, and with a sideways grin at me, he turns to them and says maybe you want to be his disciples too, what with all these questions. He challenged their judgmentalness, their blindness of heart and soul. And of course, they threw him out with so much drama and tearing of their clothes. But the story doesn't end there. Baruch has become a disciple of Yeshua – he's invited him to dinner at our home tonight. And I've been thinking about my own need for healing. I shall ask Yeshua tonight to help me be fashioned into a new woman – a woman who does not live in the darkness of fear, who's not afraid of the judgment of the religious authorities, not afraid to speak my truth, not afraid, but believing in the Light of the World, Yeshua, Jesus. How would you like to be fashioned anew? What healing do you need? What is the darkness in your life, that you wish the Light of the World to shine his light on and bring you his healing? What is the grace you need?