Not, 'Whose Fault Is It?"  

By: Rev. Saburo Masada
John 9:1-5

Today's sermon is on Mental Illness, not a common topic for a sermon, but very important and needed in our churches, and a subject very close to Marion's heart and mine.

Our Scripture Lesson comes from the Gospel of John, 9:1-5. Jesus and His disciples come upon a man who was born blind. His disciples use this opportunity to raise the age-old question that humans down through the ages, have asked when seeing human suffering:

"Master, who's sin caused this man to be born blind--his parents' sin, or his own? I call this the "blame-game."

Jesus tells His disciples that they are asking the wrong question; that they were trying to find out whose fault is was that this man was born blind. Jesus says to them, "His blindness has nothing to do with his sins, or the sins of his parents, but that the power of God might be seen at work in him."

Jesus is not saying at all that God caused this man's blindness. Rather, given the fact that there is a blind man in our midst, Jesus' focus is unmaking sure that God's Power might be seen in helping this blind man, and that God wants us to work earnestly toward that end while we have the time. You see, Jesus is telling the disciples that we are asking the wrong question when we want to figure out who is at fault that a person is born blind. Jesus is more concerned about how God wants to help us to help a person who is blind.

When our eldest daughter, Charise, became mentally ill in 1975 it was the same kind of blame-game attitude many of our well-meaning friends and others expressed to us. I know they meant well but they were not helpful.

* Some said, "Charise is having problems because she is so smart and thinks too much."
* One person said, "But Rev., you're a minister. You shouldn't have problems like that!"
* Some Christians implied, "A real Christian wouldn't get sick like this, and if Charise had real faith, she could avoid or overcome this kind of a problem."
* Others wondered, "Maybe its God's punishment."
* Some tried to comfort us saying, "Maybe it is God's way of making you grow in your faith."
* One person said, "You should just kick Charise out of the house. That will straighten her out."
* One psychiatrist told us, "Your daughter simply has 'school phobia'. I had that when I was a student but I got over it."
* Some devout Christians advised us, "It's Satan attacking her. We have to cast Satan and his demons out of Charise."

Some of these comments may sound very familiar to you. The assumption was that the question needing an answer was, "Whose fault was it?"-- Charise's, her parents', God's, Satan's, or whose?
If Jesus and His disciples had come across a man who was mentally ill instead of a man blind from birth, the disciples would have asked the same wrong question that we usually ask, "Master, whose fault was it that this man is mentally ill?" And Jesus would have answered, "You're asking the wrong question. It is neither the fault of this man, nor of his parents, but that the Power of God might be seen at work in him." That is, given the fact that a person is suffering mental illness, God wants His Power to be seen working to help that person, and God wants His disciples to help Him in this ministry.

I'm sure that one of the most important work God is doing in the area of mental illness today, revealing God's Power and Purpose, is the wonderful and amazing progress in research and public awareness, and, by the Grace of God, the growing number of persons recovering from mental illness, and also, helping the public to be a part of the solution, and not a part of the problem.

(Note: One of the portions of the sermon, which was deleted, describes the illness and significant recovery of Rev. and Mrs. Saburo Masada's daughter, Charise)

In the midst of Charise's pain and agony, she is a continual inspiration to Marion and me, and to many whose lives are touched by her. It's all by the Grace of God. We don't understand it, but we are witnesses to God's Power working out His Perfect Will in Charise's life and in ours as well.

The question is not, "Whose fault is it--who's to blame?", but rather, "What does God want me to do in order that His Power and Purpose can be seen working in our lives?" I pray that whenever you have the opportunity, God will help you to become a part of God's Purpose in ministering to the needs of those suffering brain disorders.

**Let us pray:**

*Gracious God, we thank You for continually revealing your Truth, so that we might know the truth and be set free.*

*Take our pride and our blindness from us so that we might be open to You and Your Truth.*

*Forgive us for seeking blame and imparting shame and guilt upon others and upon ourselves.*

*Enable us to be Your instruments of love and compassion, ministering especially to those suffering pain and agony from brain disorders.*

*Grant Your blessing upon the search for insight and treatment, so that we may glorify You in the healing of the sick.*

*We lift up in earnest prayer any within this congregation or their loved-ones, who are suffering a brain disorder disease.*

*Grant Your healing touch upon each one, and guide them toward recovery.*

*Thank You, Lord Jesus. Amen.*

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