

And the Oscar goes too ... “Everything, Everywhere, All at Once.”
Seven times.

This Netflix movie scooped the pool, the whole pool, and really, the whole event.

Each year the Oscars are awarded to the best films of the year. A win usually makes the movie a bigger hit, increases book office takings and makes careers for actors, directors, sound people, writers, and special effects gurus.

And this year it will be no different.

While there is always debate about who should have gotten nominated, who should have won; and recently; how fair are they, how representative! Despite all this commotion and arguing, it's generally considered that most of the time, the very best English language films anyway, make it to the nomination arena.

In our reading from the gospel of John this morning, I would like to make an Oscar nomination for possibly, the best possible screenplay ever written. I think these 41 verses are the best short story in history. If not the best, then one of the very best. It has everything. An exotic location, great characters, and some strange events. Plenty of drama and humour, good guys, bad guys, ordinary guys. Great dialogue and a subversive plot like no other.

The setting is Jerusalem, a long time ago. The characters are Jesus, the man, a beggar, born blind, the neighbours, the Pharisees and the Jews are the same people, and the man's parents. But the key to this amazing story is the plot, and how it turns on itself to speak to those who might hear it. Might read it. Might see it as a movie.

We have a man walking down the road. He sees someone with a terrible affliction. Another man born blind. The walking man then spits on the ground and makes mud. He puts the mud onto the other man's eyes and then tells him to go and wash it off. After the beggar does this, he can see. It sounds like a fairy tale with a pot of gold at the end. How does spit and dirt made into mud, and put into eyes, help someone see!

When the washed man comes back his neighbours begin to talk, “isn't this the beggar who sat on the roadside?” Others of his neighbours said, “Is it?” How blind do we have to be to not see our neighbours sitting on the roadside begging every day for the past however many years?

The washed man says, “It's me.” And that man called Jesus made mud, put it in my eyes and told me to go and wash it off. But I don't know where he is.

Now, because this is Jerusalem, a very religious city, this is a religious problem. Funny how in religious circles, what would normally be called a good thing, becomes a problem. A big problem.

You see the story now gives us a little more complicating information. “Now it was a Sabbath Day,” it says. See how religious things complicate good things.

And so, the next batch of characters turn up. The Pharisees. This is where it gets interesting. It seems this man who spits and makes mud, who rubs it in people's eyes and gives commands to wash, has a history with these people. They have come across him before, and they don't think he is up to much.

So, they ask the beggar who was blind, all the questions the neighbours asked, he gives all the same true and honest replies. As these answers are given, the Pharisees are divided. Religion starts to get in the way here for some. They say God could not have sent this man because he breaks significant religious rules. Others are not so sure. Funnily enough, the beggar who now sees, says, and sees, very plainly, "he is a prophet!"

Now the Pharisees are called the Jews, and decide that in fact, the beggar, the man who now sees, could not have been born blind in the first place.

So, firstly it was the neighbours who didn't see the beggar to acknowledge his sight. Then it was the Pharisees who didn't see Jesus for what he had done, and now the Jews refuse to see the beggar who sees now, as having been blind in the first place.

So we go to the seeing man's parents, and I think this is where the story almost moves in to slapstick comedy. The Jews say to the parents, "Is this your son? Was he born blind? How come he now sees?"

The parents are very clever and shrewd. They answer all the religious people's questions, honestly, carefully, but seemingly with a little bit of tongue in cheek. "Yes, he is our son. Yes, he was born blind. No, we don't know how he sees. In fact, don't ask us anymore questions, he's an adult, ask him what happened."

So, they ask the seeing man the same questions for the third time, but being blind themselves, make a rash statement to the man who sees. "Give glory to God, We, know this man is a sinner!" Well, this is like telling Galileo that the sun revolves around the earth. Christopher Columbus that the world is flat. Alexander Graham Bell that the telephone will never catch on.

So, the seeing man lets them have it. He gives them a blinding light lesson in their own religious teaching. Then he addresses the whole religious establishment and suggests as well as being blind, they don't listen either.

Proving his point on every level, they turn on him. This man, who has spent his life sitting on the edge of everything, on the side of the road, begging for his life, day in and day out, for who knows how many years. Never being seen, never being heard ... until one day, a spitting, mud making man ... sees him.

This is the seeing man they turn on, and justifying themselves, they tell him he is a sinner and drive him out. Presumably out of the synagogue. Out of his community. Out of his people. His faith. His family. His place.

Because he sees everything ... they take everything from him. In the religious world, such is the price of sight!

The spitting man, the mud making man, the man who rubs dirt in our eyes and tells us to wash ... the other man in the story who sees everything ... comes, and finds the now seeing man and asks him a question ... "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he Lord that I might believe?" "I, am he," the spitting, mud making man says.

“Lord, I believe.”

Seeing brings more seeing.

The Pharisees see and hear this, and come to the Son of Man,

“Surely, we are not blind, are we?”

And that ladies and gentleman ... everyone ... is the question ...

“Surely, we are not blind, are we?”

And the Oscar goes to ...