

## BEFORE YOU YELL AT THE BLIND MAN

Story for all ages, January 21  
Live Oak UU Fellowship

Imagine yourself walking along a sidewalk with your arms full of groceries and suddenly someone roughly bumps into you so that you fall and your groceries go flying all over the ground. As you rise up from the puddle of broken eggs and tomato juice, you are ready to shout "You idiot! What's wrong with you? Are you blind?" But just before you catch your breath to speak, you see that the person who bumped into you actually is blind. He too, is sprawled in the scattered groceries, and your anger vanishes in a moment, to be replaced by sympathetic concern: "Are you hurt? Can I help you up?"

Our situation is so often like that. We have inside each of us this loving compassionate heart that wants to help people, that springs into action when we see someone suffering; we want to make it better: "Are you hurt? Can I help you up?" We don't even have to think about it. It just pops out. But at the same time, most of us have this hair-trigger temper that gets mad when we feel like someone is being unfair or stupid, or disrespecting us. "You idiot! What's wrong with you? Are you blind?"

The truth is, we're all blind sometimes. Not *actually* unable to see, but we can get caught up in our own concerns and our own suffering so that we can't see how our words or actions might hurt another person. I am blinded almost every day by the thought that it's more important to be someplace on time than it is to speak with kindness to Isaiah. Or here's another example: say you're at school, and one of your classmates says something mean to you. You feel hurt, and then you want to say something mean right back to them to pay them back, right? But you have no idea what might have caused that kid to be mean. Maybe she just found out that morning that her parents were getting a divorce. Or maybe she's got a new baby sister who cries all night and she hasn't had a good night's sleep in ages. She's tired. She's cranky. When I get tired and cranky, I get mean. Don't you? Or maybe right before she came into school, someone on the playground said something really mean to her, but they ran away before she could say something mean back, so instead you're the one who receives the insult. You just don't know.

But one thing we do know. Trading meanness for meanness just makes everybody miserable. Your classmate who said something mean to you is like the blind man. You don't want to yell at the blind man. You want to help him up, and make sure he's OK. Easier said than done, I know. I'm as quick as anybody to take offense when I feel insulted. Just ask my husband.

But I've been discovering that there are ways to cultivate this loving heart we have inside us, like a farmer cultivates his crops to help them grow, so we can be less quick to yell and more apt to try and help. We'll be working on that down here while you guys go upstairs with Laura and Kathryn and Sarah now. Thanks for being such good listeners. Join us in singing this round, "Sing and Rejoice" and then you can go on upstairs...