

Encountering Jesus: John 9, The Blind Man, 11/19/2017

Have you ever said something and the moment it comes out of your mouth you wanted to take it back? I'm sure that NEVER happens to any of you. Well it has happened to me. Story of baptism. When I told Shannan, she just shook her head. The story in John 9 starts with a head shaking moment for Jesus with his disciples.

John 9:1-2

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

They see a blind man begging on the side of the road and they see an opportunity for a theological discussion rather than compassion. The disciples are most concerned with how he got like this? Illustration- Falling down steps. It is much easier to discuss an abstract subject like 'sin' than it is to minister to a concrete need in the life of a person. Myra update? But they didn't just fail the mercy test. They failed in the theology test. Listen to how Jesus responds.

John 9:3-5

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

The disciples had a theological misunderstanding of sin and suffering. The disciples were operating on the law of retribution. Goodness=blessing, badness=cursing. Now they are half right...there is a general reaping and sowing principle of life. Galatians 5. Sin does lie behind all the suffering and evil in the world, but it is cruel and ignorant to assume that someone's situation, especially congenital issues, are a direct result of sin. Jesus was gracious- I think I would have smacked them upside the head...have you learned nothing from Job's three friends? The disciples viewed the beggar's condition as an indication of divine displeasure, but Jesus saw it as an opportunity for divine compassion. He's saying now is not the time for theological debate, now is the time for action!

Jesus turns the disciples question around and says, in effect, human causes are not decisive in explaining things, human causes don't tell the whole story or answer all the questions. Divine purposes are decisive explaining things. God has it and he is doing something with it. This is summed up in part by Joseph's profound statement to his brothers who sold him into slavery, "What you meant for evil, God intended for good!"

The implication of this for your life is profound. No matter what mess you're in or what pain you're in, the causes of that mess and that pain are not decisive in explaining it. They are not the end of the story and you are not meant to stay in it

and let it define you. I was speaking with someone recently who is just plain stuck in the why?, in the causes, and what those people did to him... It will get you nowhere to blame, worry about who caused it, grow bitter and crusty toward others, or grow despondent. Yes, there are causes. Some of them your fault, perhaps, and some of them not. But instead of "Why me? Who's fault? It is better to ask "God, what will you do with this?" Trust that he will work good, he is doing a 1000 things behind the scenes that you may not see until eternity. But trust! Now that's the sermon, that's for free. So, what is God going to do with this beggar?

John 9:6-7

After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

Amazing miracle! Take a moment and soak this in...

Now why mud, with spit? Umm...Jesus, I heard about the lame man that you just told to stand up and walk...How come I get muddy spit? Do you know how much spit you need to make mud balls? Jesus could have commanded his eyes to see. If we keep reading I think we get a window into what Jesus is up to.

John 9:14,16

¹⁴ Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath."

One of the 39 interpretations of the Sabbath rules of what you can't do is you can't kneed dough, clay, mud...same greek word. He did the miracle purposefully in a way that broke the law in the way the Pharisees understood it. Why? To trigger a controversy that would expose hearts. Listen-

John 9:39

Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."

You see the next level that Jesus has in mind? He is going to open his physical eyes to see, as a metaphor for the bigger need, so that the blind eyes of our heart would be opened to see Jesus as the Savior AND he did it on the Sabbath so that those who THINK they see (think they don't need saving) will be exposed for what they really are- spiritually blind.

Over the five conversations that follow this miracle we will watch this happen. Little by little the spiritual eyes of the blind man get clearer and clearer. And little by little, the blindness of the Pharisees gets darker and darker. Amazing by the end of the story what this beggar is able to do to these Pharisees. You don't want to be like these Pharisees at the end of this. My prayer is that all of us will be like the beggar.

Conversation #1 The Beggar and His Neighbors (Verses 8-12)

John 9:8-9

His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man."

It makes sense that it was hard to believe. They are also seeing this man out of context. They are used to seeing him on the road begging and now he is walking around. Some people don't recognize me when I'm out of context. Work out over at the gym hat turned backwards, ear buds, gym shorts...takes a while until people recognize me.

John 9:10-12

"How then were your eyes opened?" they asked. He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said.

So at this point, he simply calls Jesus "the man." He's got the name...spiritually he sees, but it's dimly.

Conversation #2 The Beggar and the Pharisees (Verses 13-17)

John 9:16-17

Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner perform such signs?" So they were divided. Then they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet."

Something is happening in this interchange. Do you see it? The Pharisees are starting to get exposed, cloudy understanding, Doubt, concern about the law instead of joy over the healing... But something is also happening in the beggar's heart. He answers in verse 17, "He is a prophet." He has gone from "man" to "prophet," sent by God. That's true but not the whole truth. Miracle happens Pharisees respond in doubt and legalism, beggar responds in faith.

Conversation #3 The Pharisees and the Parents (Verses 18-23)

They ask in verse 19: Is he your son? Was he born blind? How does he see? They answer. He is our son, and he was born blind, but we don't know how he was healed. And John says in verse 22 that the reason they said this was because they feared the Jews who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.

One Scholar-

"The Jews had three types of excommunication: one lasting 30 days, during which the person could not come within six feet of anybody else; one for an indefinite time, during which the person was excluded from all fellowship and worship; and one that meant absolute expulsion forever. These judgments were very serious because no one could conduct business with a person who was excommunicated."

So the parents were being very careful, trying to walk a tightrope. I think the point here is not to be hard on the parents, but to make the son's courage all the more amazing as we are going to see.

Conversation #4 The Beggar and the Pharisees (Verses 24-34)

Now we are going to see hearts get exposed... the spiritual seeing of the beggar and the blindness of the Pharisees deepen and widen.

John 9:24

A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God by telling the truth," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

Join us in our blasphemy (calling God in flesh a sinner) or we will excommunicate you! Pressure is on...And amazingly he responds to this threat with his most famous statement of all.

John 9:25

He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

The power of a personal testimony over a bad argument is very great. Don't be intimidated when people try to trap you or pressure you about your faith! When you have people who try to convince you based on their "scientific argument", mockery or something Hitchens wrote... A miracle happened when you came to Christ. Where would you be if you never met Christ? Every one of us ought to be able to point to transformation in our lives because of God's work. You might not know everything they do but you know that you were blind but now see! That's not anti-intellectual, there is a place for a defense of faith... but often our greatest apologetic is a changed life! I hope you have enough courage to say it.

John 9:26-27

Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?"

Whoa...what are you doing man? Sarcasm? Really? But at this point he's just gaining more and more courage. Now the Pharisees become hostile. Gloves are off...

John 9:28-29

Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

The controversy exposes even more blindness. No, they are not disciples of Moses. Because Jesus said in **John 5:46** *"If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me."*

Now the former beggar turns into a theologian and takes the Pharisees to school...the irony!

John 9:30-34

*The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." See his logic? He's calling them out on their blindness... "Your instinct when you see a miracle that has never been performed before is to NOT attribute it to God?" **To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.** No attempt to respond to a solid argument, just insults. Sometimes when people run out of responses they default to insults and violence.*

And so now he is in a predicament. He is excommunicated and condemned. To whom will he turn now? He doesn't have to turn to anyone...v. 35 Jesus found and sought him out. Nobody else might care but Jesus cares. Just like he cared about the crippled man, and the woman at the well and the woman caught in adultery and Myra. And you and me. Oh, I hope we are seeing this.

Conversation #5 Jesus and the Beggar (Verses 35-38)

John 9:35-38

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

As significant as it was that Jesus opened the eyes of this man, it was most significant that the eyes of his heart were opened, little by little. He realized Jesus was far more than a man, far more than a culture changer, far more than a prophet, far more than a miracle worker sent from God, He is the Lord Jesus who is to be worshipped.

Who is Jesus to you? Keep going back to this question throughout the series because there are some of us that are still on the fence about Jesus? I pray that God would open the eyes of your heart...maybe little by little just as he did with this man, so that you too would say, "Lord, I believe." And worship him.

For those of us that are Christ followers.

Growing up we used to sing “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine. Hide it under a bushel? No! I’m gonna let it shine.” Well that is exactly what we see exemplified by formerly blind beggar. And what was most exemplary is that when the pressure was turned up, when insult, judgment and the threat of rejection became a reality, he didn’t hide it under a bushel, he took his little light and let it shine all the brighter. Why? **Faith under pressure results in Worship and Witness.**

This must have been a significant story for the readers of Jewish readers of John’s gospel who would have been facing the same kind of decision. **Will we let our light shine when the pressure is turned up?** Or will our light fade, dim and darken? That was the challenge in the first century. And the early church responded in courageous faith all the more under pressure and changed the world upside down.

I would submit to you that we are in a day when shining our little light comes with increasing pressure, hostility and threat of rejection. BVBC will not back down from being a lighthouse for the gospel in the Brandywine Valley.

What about as an individual? Do you find your worship of Jesus growing brighter or dimmer in the midst of pressure? Do does your testimony as a Christ follower grow brighter or dimmer with the threat of marginalization in social circles or even in the workplace? The rejection by family members? The mockery and ridicule by some who would label you unfairly? Will your little light shine? Culture says privatize your faith- shouldn’t affect your politics, business, how you address cultural issues, civic involvement. Many buy into that- private faith, you may have a personal relationship but Christianity knows of no such thing as a private faith.

We don’t have to have all the answers to all the questions. But all of us who follow Christ have a testimony. “All I know is that I once was blind but now I see.” Will you let your light shine when the pressure is turned up?