

For the last two weeks we have met people who became witnesses of who Jesus is and the power that God gave him. Two weeks ago we met Nicodemus whom Jesus told that we must be born again and that God so loved the world that God gave Jesus so that anyone that believed in Jesus would have eternal life. Last week we met a woman from Samaria whom Jesus introduced himself as “Living Water” that if one drank of the water he gave they will have a well of water flowing in them. This week we meet a host of people who are blind...one is physically blind, but the rest of spiritually blind because of tradition, prejudice, culture, or fear. To the group today Jesus is the “Light of the World.”

The story is told of a man who visited one day in a classroom for visually impaired children. Troubled by what he saw, the man remarked (rather insensitively), “It must be terrible to go through life without your eyes.” A young girl quickly responded, “It’s not half so bad as having two good eyes but still not being able to see.” Her point was well made. There are varieties of blindness. And perhaps none is more tragic than that which affects ‘the eyes of the heart’ (Eph. 1:18).”¹

Jesus and his disciples were visiting Jerusalem and they saw a man who was blind from birth. About the only thing a blind man could do in that day was beg, and that is what this man was doing when Jesus passed by (John 9:8). Apparently the man and his parents were well known in the community. And it was on the Sabbath when Jesus healed the man (John 9:14).

The disciples were blind as they did not look at the man as an object of mercy but rather as a subject for a theological discussion. The disciples were sure, as the Jews of their day, that the man’s congenital blindness was caused by sin, either his own or his parents.’ But only God knows why babies are born with handicaps, and only God can turn those handicaps into something that will bring good to the people and glory to God’s name. Certainly both the man and his parents had at some time committed sin, but Jesus did not see their sin as the cause of the man’s blindness. Nor did He suggest that God deliberately

¹ *Abingdon Preacher’s Annual 1993*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992, edited Bergland, John K., 94

made the man blind so that, years later, Jesus could perform a miracle. Since there is no punctuation in the original manuscripts, we are free to read John 9:3–4 this way: Neither has this man sinned nor his parents. But that the works of God should be made manifest in him, I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day. So Jesus put clay on the man's eyes and told him to go wash. The man obeyed and came back seeing. The man understood Jesus to be the "Light of the World" as Jesus gave him his sight and he could experience all the sights of the world that he had only heard about previously. Now he could look into the faces of his parents, go where he wished, learn a trade and make a living other than being a beggar, and live life as he pleased.

The neighbors were blinded by the fact that the man was born blind, had been blind all his life, and in their minds he would always be blind. They were blind to the fact that Jesus walked among them and had the power to change lives. Some said he was the man, but others thought he just looked like the man who they knew to be blind. The man tried to tell them that it was really him, but some just could not believe. They took him to the Jewish council, the religious leaders, to make judgment on the situation. So off to the council they went.

The Pharisees asked the man how he had been healed. They were blinded by their rules that they had added to God's Law. They were not satisfied with his answer so they asked the man's parents. The parents were sure the man was their son and had been born blind but they were blinded by their fear of their religious leaders and the fact that they could be excommunicated if they gave credit to Jesus for the healing of their son. Besides the parents said, our son is of an age that he can speak for himself. So the council members gave the son one final interrogation. All of this looked very official and efficient, but it was really a most evasive maneuver on the part of both the people and the leaders. The Pharisees wanted to get rid of the evidence, and the people were afraid to speak the truth!

When asked to describe his experience, the man simply told what had happened. All he knew about the person who had done the miracle was that He was "a man called Jesus." He had not seen Jesus; but he had heard Jesus' voice.

Since the Pharisees were the custodians of the faith, it was right that the healed man be brought to them for investigation. The fact that they studied this miracle in such detail is proof that Jesus did indeed heal the man. Since the man was born blind, the miracle was even greater, because blindness caused by sickness or injury might suddenly go away.

The fact that Jesus deliberately healed the man on the Sabbath Day caused the Pharisees great concern. It was illegal to work on the Sabbath; and by making the clay, applying the clay, and healing the man, Jesus had performed three unlawful “works.” You would have thought the Pharisees would have been praising God for a miracle; instead, they looked for evidence to prosecute Jesus.

The religious leaders were judging on the basis of one thing: nobody who breaks the Sabbath could possibly be a true prophet of God. They were “one-issue” thinkers, not unlike some religious people today. The Pharisees did not realize that Jesus was offering the people something greater than the Sabbath—the true spiritual rest that comes from God (Matt. 11:28–30).

When asked who he thought Jesus was, the man boldly said, “He is a prophet!” (Note John 4:19 for a parallel.) Every Jew knew about the Old Testament prophets; Moses, Elijah, and Elisha perform miracles by the power of God.

But the religious leaders did not want to see Jesus given that kind of high designation. “This man is not of God!” (John 9:16) They hoped to discredit the miracle by convincing the people that Jesus had plotted the whole thing and was really deceiving the people. He had craftily “switched” beggars so that the sighted man was not the man who had been known as the blind beggar. The Pharisees could present a “good case” for their position. After all, they did have the Law of Moses as well as centuries of Jewish tradition.

When the Pharisees called the man in; this time they put him under oath. “Give God the praise” is a form of Jewish “swearing in” at court (see Josh. 7:19). But they were blind and prejudiced. “We know that this Man is a sinner!” They were warning the witness that he had better cooperate with the court, or he might be excommunicated. But he had experienced a miracle, and he was not afraid to tell them what had happened. One thing he

knew: now he could see. Then he boldly asked the irate Pharisees if they wanted to follow Jesus! Unable to refute the evidence, the judges began to verbally abuse the witness.

The beggar then gave the “experts” a lesson in practical theology. The leaders called Jesus a sinner (John 9:24), but Jesus was used of God to open the blind man’s eyes. He added another telling argument: Jesus healed a man born blind. Never, to their knowledge, had this occurred before. So, God not only heard Jesus, but God enabled Jesus to give the man sight. How, then, could Jesus be a sinner?

These religious bigots were spiritually blind and would not want to face either evidence or logic. Their minds are made up. Had the Pharisees honestly considered the facts, they would have seen that Jesus is the Son of God and is the light of the world, and they could have trusted Him and been saved. Instead the leaders verbally abused the man more by telling him he was born in sin. But that did not matter: all of us are born in sin (Ps. 51:5), but we do not have to continue to live in sin (Col. 3:6–7) or die in our sins. Faith in Jesus Christ redeems us from sin and gives us a life of joyful liberty.

The religious leaders officially excommunicated this man from the local synagogue. This meant that the man was cut off from friends and family and looked on by the Jews as a “publican and sinner.”

Jesus knew that the man had been excommunicated, so He found him and revealed Himself to him. The man now received knowledge of Jesus Christ and put his faith in Him. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (1 John 5:1). John wrote his Gospel to prove that Jesus is the Son of God, and to present to us the testimonies of people who met Jesus and affirmed that He is God’s Son. This beggar is one such witness.

The question that each of us must answer today is who am I in this story? Am I a member of the spiritually blind disciples who saw the man as an object of debate but had no compassion to assist him, not even to give him alms? Am I one of the spiritually blind neighbor, so prejudice that I don’t think people can change? Am I one of the spiritually blind parents, too concerned about what other think of us? Am I one of the spiritually

blind Jewish council members who could not believe in Jesus because of their man-made rules? Or am I the former blind beggar who has had my sight restored and now I have faith in Jesus as my Lord and my Savior? The choice is yours, the choice is mine. Jesus is waiting to heal us and save us if we are willing to come to Him and accept him as the Light of the World!^{2 3 4}

You may think this is just a nice story in the Bible. But on Friday I attend a conference with a colleague who is blind. The workshop facilitator asked each attendee to introduce ourselves with expression and emotion. My friend was the first and he told of his joy in the Lord, his joy, his peace and his love as he experienced Jesus as his Lord, his King, his Light of his world!

It is said that Napoleon heard some clever skeptics discussing Jesus. They dismissed him as a very great man and nothing more. “Gentlemen,” said Napoleon, “I know men, and Jesus Christ was more than a man.”

“If Jesus Christ is a man
And only a man—I say
That of all mankind I cleave to him
And to him will I cleave always.
If Jesus Christ is a god—
And the only God—I swear
I will follow him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, and the air!”

It is a tremendous thing about Jesus that the more we know him the greater he becomes. The trouble with human relationships is that often the better we know a person the more we know his weaknesses and his failings; but the more we know Jesus, the greater the wonder becomes; and that will be true, not only in time, but also in eternity.⁵

²Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Jn 9:1

³Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:307

⁴Richards, Lawrence O.: *The Bible Readers Companion*. electronic ed. Wheaton : Victor Books, 1991; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996, S. 686

⁵Barclay, William, lecturer in the University of Glasgow (Hrsg.): *The Gospel of John : Volume 2*. Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975 (The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. Ed), S. 36