

WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

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No: 85

"The sixth of the signs" - Jesus heals a man born blind.

Brief Talk on John 9: 1-41

Read John 9: 1-41

Introduction

Jesus goes over to the blind man to help him. Notice that when the disciples see the blind man, they see something to discuss, but when Jesus sees him, He sees something to do.

We find a man who was blind from birth receiving his sight. And it is an incredible story. It's amazing in a number of different ways, not just in the miracle itself but also as we meet one of the greatest minor characters in the NT. This once blind man is witty, sharp, stubborn and faithful, all rolled into one. You cannot but love him. But actually as we read deeper into this chapter, we discover that it's not really about the once blind man at all. It's actually about Jesus. And nor is it a chapter which simply teaches us about Jesus' amazing power, remarkable though it is that Jesus should heal in an instant a man born blind. It's deeper still. The healing is a sign pointing to something about Jesus. Because Jesus himself makes it clear at the end of the chapter that this miracle is an acted parable. It's a real historical event but it's teaching us a very important spiritual truth. See what Jesus says in verse 39: "Jesus said, 'For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.'" All throughout John's gospel so far, issues of darkness and light, blindness and sight have been raised. Jesus is saying that there is a great division in humanity between those who walk in the light, who can see spiritually speaking, who follow Jesus; and those on the other hand who are in the dark, who are blind, spiritually speaking, and who do not follow Jesus. And Jesus is the key on which our spiritual status turns. And it's that truth, illustrated by this remarkable healing, that is the heart of the chapter.

Questions for discussion

1. What ideas lie behind the disciples' question (v.1,2): Curiosity? Stereotyping? Guilt tripping? A trap? Compassion?
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2. What does Jesus' answer (vv.3-5) reveal about how he views the man's pain? What does this teach us about stereotyping people's suffering by attributing it always to their sinfulness? How are sin and suffering related (see 5:14)?
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Comment

A common belief in Jewish culture was that calamity or suffering was always as a result of some great sin. But Jesus uses this sign to teach about faith and to glorify God. We live in a fallen world where good behaviour is not always rewarded and bad behaviour is not always punished. Therefore, innocent people sometimes suffer. Regardless of the reason for our suffering, Jesus has the power to help us deal with it.

3. In this story, what is the work of God (v.3)? The night that is coming (v.4) (compare 7:33, 11:9, 12:35, Gal. 6;10)? The "light of the world"? (v.5)
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4. What convinces some of the Pharisees to stand against Jesus? (v.16; see also 5:9-10, 23)? How is following Jesus like following someone with a light through a dark place? How do some people you know misunderstand Jesus and how do their lives exemplify darkness?
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Comment

The Jewish Sabbath was the weekly holy day of rest. The Pharisees had made a long list of specific do's and don'ts regarding the Sabbath.

Kneading the clay and healing the man was considered work and therefore were forbidden. Jesus may have purposely made the clay in order to emphasize his teaching about Sabbath—that it is right to care for others' needs even if it involves working on a day of rest.

5. Note the conflicting claims to knowledge and certainty on the part of the Pharisees, the parents, and the man born blind. What is each party sure of? Not sure of?
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6. In the course of this investigation by the Pharisees, (a) what is the man able to see about Jesus (vv. 17, 25, 27, 30-33, also 36, 38)? (b) About the Pharisees?
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Comment

The man who was healed had been asked the same questions over and over. He did not know how or why he was healed. But he knew that his life has been miraculously changed and he was not afraid to tell the truth. Where the man himself had the courage to stand up for Jesus, his parents don't. (They are more afraid of men than God. Now there is no doubt that to be booted out of the synagogue was a social disaster. Life revolved around the synagogue. If you were put out of the synagogue it would mean social ostracism. So they don't want to say too much that will antagonise the authorities.)

You don't need to know all the answers in order to share Christ with others. It is important to tell them how he has changed your life. Then trust that God will use your words to help others believe in him too.

7. In contrast to the man's growing spiritual insight, how are the Pharisees progressing? What is the Pharisees' real motive in questioning the healed man? (vv.28,34) How did the authorities react to the healed man's faith (v.34)? What in your opinion is the thrust of the miracle (vv. 38-41)?
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Conclusion

In this sign (miracle), we learn that: (1) We must all admit we're blind. We are blinded to God and his truth so that we don't go his way. Like the blind man in John's story, we are blind from birth. We never walk in God's way and even try and ignore him. We're heading for danger if we stumble around without help. And so the first thing we must do is to admit we are blind, to admit we are helpless and that we need God's help to bring us to him.

2) We must come to Jesus to see. He can give us sight and enable us to go God's way. And the reason is in verse 5. Jesus says: "I am the Light of the World." And in John's gospel (8:12) Jesus says: "I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me, will never walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life." So Jesus says the reason he has come is so that we could see, that we can have a friendship with God and walk in his way, which is the right way.

When we observe the healed man's progression of faith, First, he refers to Jesus as a Man. He says "The man Jesus did this for me." Next, He calls Jesus a Prophet. He says: "To be able to do this he must be a Prophet." Then in that intimate moment at the end he sees Him as the Son of God. And finally, he claims Him as "The Lord of His Life."

He began the day a blind beggar, who could not see. Now he's been given sight, but far more significantly he has been given spiritual sight. His spiritual eyes have been healed and he sees Jesus as his Lord and King. Now I doubt he fully understood everything about Jesus, but he knew enough to realise that Jesus was worthy of his adoration and commitment. And as such he stands as a great encouragement and challenge to you and me.. Because if we are men and women who profess to follow this Lord Jesus, then do we display these marks of the person in the light. Trusting Jesus in difficulty, standing for Jesus in adversity, and worshipping Jesus in humility? It was something the parents could not do because of fear, and it was something the Pharisees could not do because of pride. They thought they could see, but in fact they were blind.

We must worship Jesus in humility as the only Saviour and only Lord. For those are the marks of those who can really see.