

The Gospel of John - #36 - 09/26/2021 - "Formerly Blind!" 9: 1-23

Introduction: IL- Vision Aware, website that seeks to help those legally blind, observes:

"No two people experience vision loss in the same way. Many feel sadness, grief, anger, and other powerful emotions. Vision loss inevitably results in lifestyle changes and has an impact upon the lives of family members, friends, and significant others. Each person dealing with vision loss is unique; each has a compelling story to tell."

We are going to examine today's compelling story and hopefully "see" the lessons God intends for us to understand! This running commentary in two key parts will prompt us, I trust, to thank God for opening our spiritual eyes to the truth about our Savior- the Lord Jesus Christ!

Jesus, the Disciples and the Neighbors- verses 1- 13 "As He passed by, He saw..."

The miracle and the questions...another demonstration of the power and compassion of Jesus- this is the sixth of seven miracles that the Apostle John records for us. Jesus knows everyone in the crowd- and He knows what this blind beggar needs, physically and spiritually! This man's blindness was not the result of some sin, especially not as a fetus in his mother's womb! Jewish thought- the parents sinned and brought this blindness of their son. Greeks believed in reincarnation and that our physical suffering in this life is due to something we did wrong in a previous life. Jesus is clear that this man's blindness has a higher cause- the glory of God! (In John 11 when Lazarus was sick, Jesus said, in verse 4- "This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God! IL- J. B. Philipps- "God is too loving to be unkind, too wise to make mistakes and too powerful to be thwarted in His purposes!" This was not a coincidental meeting but an encounter with a divine purpose! It is a picture of man's need in the context of what God can do- which is anything! It was planned to bring God into this man's life. Jesus takes a moment to teach His disciples about the plans of the Father for Jesus' ministry and His work at Calvary. His work, and that of the disciples, was ending on earth, just like our time to serve the Lord will end, either by death or by the catching away of the Church at any moment! "The night" refers to when Jesus would be gone- the Light of the world ascending to Heaven after His death, burial and resurrection. Then Jesus makes clay out of His saliva and the dirt, places that mud pie on the man's eyes and tells him to go wash it off in the Pool of Siloam. Some expositors write about the dirt being a picture of God making man, Adam, out of the dust of the ground. In Genesis 2: 7 God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." Here the addition to the clay was the saliva which portrays Jesus as the Giver of the water of life! Jesus worked some of His miracles without some physical item being used as in this case, while on other occasions He merely spoke the words and healing took place. With or without something additional, Jesus is always Jehovah Rapha- the God who heals! Either way He gets the glory, and we get the blessing! The man was instructed to go to the Pool of Siloam on the southern end of the Temple Mount and wash off the clay. We don't know exactly why Jesus used the clay or what the significance is of the man receiving his sight upon washing. The word Siloam means "sent" and reminds us that Jesus was sent by the Father to do His work that included healings of all kinds and, in this case, restoring sight to this blind man. Psalm 146: 7 and 8- "The Lord sets the prisoner free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed

down." One reason why Jesus used the clay and gave instruction to wash in the Pool is that He often called for the active response of faith! This entire account in verses 1-12 illustrates the truth of Luke 19: 10- "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost!" Jesus worked more miracles of giving sight to the blind than any other type of healing. I believe that is because such a miracle is a picture of spiritual blindness being removed and the person, any person still outside of Christ, being given eyes to see the Lord and themselves as recipients of salvation by grace through faith! Verses 1-7 remind us that throughout man's history we all have been burdened with sin and guilt, but that such a condition can be removed through the work Jesus accomplished on the Cross! Verses 8-12 demonstrate that most of the people of the world, in any age, have been confused about who Jesus is and why He came! Each of us is born spiritually blind, according to 2 Corinthians 4: 3, 4 but we can experience the intimate touch of Jesus on their lives to change us from within! My favorite line in this account is in verse 7- "he went and washed and came back seeing!" In verses 8-12 the man's neighbors and those who regularly saw him sitting outside one of the entrances to the Temple courtyard spoke up but were confused as to this man's true identity. The formerly blind man kept saying, emphatically, "It is ME- I'm the man you are talking about!" He didn't know much at this point about Jesus- even where He might be at that moment, but he maintained that Jesus was the One who healed him. He is a n example, and more will follow, of a young Christian seeking to share their story of conversion. He is a powerful testimony of a transformed life! He shows that you don't need to be a Rabbi or a student of deep theological concepts in order to share your faith experience! He didn't walk away disgusted with his neighbors or frustrated at their puzzlement. He told them exactly how his healing came about!

The formerly blind man, the Pharisees and the Parents- verses 14- 23 Those unable to see God at work or understand His message are the truly spiritually blind, but that can change by the power of God!

The Sabbath and the division... the neighbors and friends who started all the questioning brought the formerly blind man to the Pharisees, the religious leaders for even more questioning. This miracle took place on a Sabbath day and that presented the leaders with a number of accusations against Jesus- making those mud cakes, anointing the blind man's eyes with the clay, and healing on a Sabbath day. All of that was against the rabbinic rules- not the Old Testament Law, but the detailed additions to it that the noted rabbis had developed over centuries leading up to the time of the Messiah. There was a sharp disagreement among these religious leaders- some said Jesus had to be from some other source rather than from God. Still others were certain that a "sinner" couldn't possibly heal and open the eyes of a man born blind. There are many people like that today who remain spiritually blind- some because they hate God and do all they can to disprove truth from the Bible. Others struggle with sin and guilt and can't imagine they could ever be forgiven. And some have honest questions and are looking to professed believers to answer those questions but not getting anywhere. Some do not see the REAL Gospel lived out in the lives of Christians around them. But most unsaved people, blinded by Satan so as to not see or understand the Good News, are bound by self-righteousness- by their own good deeds done to impress God and with the unreal hope of entrance to Heaven when they die. This former blind man knew he was healed because he

could see "20-20" now. When asked what his thoughts were about Jesus he said, "He is a prophet". That was the highest honor he could give the Savior at that point, but later in the chapter we'll see that he put complete trust in Jesus, believed in Him and worshiped Him! The man's parents are questioned next and they, of course, know that this man is their own son, and they know he was blind from birth. But the rest of the account of his healing they didn't understand. They told the Jewish leaders- "Ask him- he can speak for himself. And the text is straightforward in saying that they reacted that way out of fear- fear of excommunication from everything important in the Jewish faith- not the least of it being barred from being anywhere around the Temple Mount. What can sometimes be called the "fear factor" also affects some Christians today. They are not sure what to say to a non-Christian, afraid of giving wrong information, afraid of the backlash that may come, afraid of offending a neighbor or friend. But Paul tells us, in 2 Timothy 1: 7, that God has not given us a spirit of fear (it really is from Satan) but rather power, love and a sound or healthy mind. That means we can be as bold as this formerly blind man and speak lovingly of our Savior who can be that person's Savior too! This formerly blind man is evidence that God can use any of us whose lives have been changed by His grace to testify when opportunities come of that grace and mercy that God pours over the eyes of the sinner and he or she "sees" the truth for the first time, like what happened to you and me! I urge you, before we come to the Lord's table today for communion, to "turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace!" That's what changes us from being formerly blind and sinful to being able to see God at work around us and enables us to be powerful carriers of the message of the Good News. That's the difference Jesus makes when He "passes by" a sinner who is ready to receive and new life with new eyes!

Conclusion:

"Oh, what a difference when Jesus passed by!" Words and music by Bill Gaither

Like a blind man I wandered So lost and undone A beggar so helpless Without God or His Son
Then my Savior in mercy Heard and answered my cry And oh what a difference Since Jesus
passed by!

Since Jesus passed by Since Jesus passed by Oh what a difference Since Jesus passed by Well I
can't explain it And I cannot tell you why But oh what a difference- Oh what a difference Since
Jesus passed by!