



SoulShare

Saturday, October 13, 2018, 9:00—10:30 am Breakfast & Discussion:

Man Born Blind John 9:1 - 10:21

I was blind but now I see! Can I make you understand what that means? As a child, touching, tasting, smelling and hearing the world around me, my parents tried to explain “light” and I could not understand what they meant. But I did know that there were things that others could do and I could not. When I grew old enough to live on my own, all I could really do was beg. And that had to be with the help of friends who brought me to a suitable place. I knew how to get there, but there were always carts, animals and small children that got in the way, often unexpectedly.

On the street I always heard many voices and recognized most of them. My hearing is very good and so is my memory. The words were often blame or pity. “This man is cursed,” or “Praise be that I am not as he!” But one voice that amazing day was new and was answering a question someone had just asked, a question I had heard many times. It was the reason my parents could no longer house me, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents?”

The answer was unique, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” I asked a nearby person who it was and he said, “Jesus.” Then I heard Jesus say, “I am the light of the world,” and the question I had been asking all my life jumped back into my mind, “What is light?”

Before I had time to pursue that thought, I heard Jesus spit. He was very near and I expected that he was spitting in my face, but nothing hit me and then there was a scraping sound on the ground and I felt something moist on my eyes that smelled like mud. “Go,” he told me, “Wash in the Pool of Siloam.”

I knew the way but at this time of day needed help. Somehow it never occurred to me to mistrust this voice. It is like I knew him. I washed and suddenly my mind was flooded with a totally new sensation. “So this is light!” I said to myself and apparently out loud because a great commotion started. I heard voices, some that I knew and now I saw their faces! I have heard people talk of putting a face with a voice but previously I did not even know what a face looked like. I had an idea of the shape from those people who let me touch their faces but beyond the features of nose, cheeks and chin, I saw expressions!

I heard a great commotion and saw people arguing with angry words and faces that I now was able to connect with anger. Others with praise to God had expressions that I now knew to be joy. Those who cared about me were happy but those who did not were skeptical or even angry, claiming that it was not even me. Everybody wanted to know the details and I got really tired of repeating the story over and over.

I was brought to the Pharisees and questioned yet again. The tone of their voices and the expressions of their faces were not like the joyful compassion of my friends. They had something in mind and were gathering evidence. Did I forget to tell you that it was the Sabbath? Over the generations, the command of Moses to keep the Sabbath had been refined into detailed descriptions of what constituted work. Most of the Pharisees obviously believed that making

mud, walking to the pool and washing constituted breaking the Sabbath, although a few noticed that a miracle had been performed.

They asked me my opinion of the man who healed me and I said simply, "He is a prophet." They didn't like that and called for my parents who were very nervous about the interrogation. "We know he is our son," they answered, "and we know he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself."

That seemed to really upset the Pharisees and I was getting an intense course in the facial expression of negative emotion. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." "I replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" Instead of processing the implication of my testimony, they began the interrogation all over again. I was getting really annoyed and said, "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?"

I knew I was in trouble but could not stop. They were really angry now, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

I countered with words I did not expect of myself, perhaps they were given me from above, "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 man 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."

They had no reply so they said, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw me out. I knew that there were severe consequences for me and my family but marveled that this could happen because of a good deed and a miracle that was being called evil on a technicality.

Then Jesus reappeared in front of me and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" I 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 I said, "Lord, I believe," and bowed down and worshiped him. Then he said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."

Some Pharisees who were nearby heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains." I was mentally wrestling with the revolutionary concept that the most religious were actually spiritually blind when I was aware that Jesus had gone on to an illustration of his teaching by speaking about the good shepherd who cares for the sheep and the thief who comes to steal, kill and destroy. He said he was the good shepherd and the sheep know his voice.

That really got through to me. I knew voices, crafty voices, arrogant voices, condescending voices and compassionate voices. I knew his voice and knew that he could be trusted. I will never stop telling of what he has done for me.

What do you think is the number one lesson of this account? Is it about suffering or about God? Do you know anyone who is blind? Born blind? What have you learned from them? How do we tend to treat people with disability? What are some of the unhelpful attitudes? Do we often forget they are people? Is it possible instead to focus on abilities instead of disabilities? Why do we seem to want to assign blame for a tragedy? Is the basic error like that of Job's friends? How was "the work of God displayed in his life?" Can you imagine seeing light for the first time? Is it incredible that some people, like the Pharisees, were upset and angry about the healing? Have you ever been involved in a situation like that where good is condemned as evil? Did it take courage for the formerly blind man to speak back to the religious leaders? Does it sound like this man was well educated and thoughtful? Why would that surprise you? Having talked with Jesus again after the healing, describe what we can see happening to his spiritual and mental state. Do you agree that he was going to be a powerful witness for Jesus?