

## **Blind from Birth**

**John 9:1-41**

**Jeremy Suisted 22/11/20**

### **Sermon Summary**

“Oh, the depth of the riches...of God” (Romans 11:33). Take a simple historical story, talk about it in detail, and the apparent simplicity suddenly opens up the riches of God. That is certainly the outcome of this morning’s sermon on John chapter 9, delivered by Jeremy Suisted.

In many groups where humans gather, there will always be the isolated, the untouchables who will be ignored. In this story, Jesus comes upon one of these people in his ministry.

He is a man – blind from birth. Such people were marginalized in those times. They thought blindness was a result of sin. He is (probably) sitting while the crowd passes by. Nobody is paying attention to him. Despite the throng of humanity, it is he whom Jesus sees. And Jesus’ attention is noted by his apostles who immediately see the man as a theological problem. They quiz Jesus as to the source of his blindness: “Did he or his parents sin?” (John 9:2).

That’s like most people; it is easier to talk about problems than people. We should participate in people’s sufferings – that is God’s desire for our actions.

Now come verses 6 and 7: This has to be one of the most unusual medical treatments ever made. For starters: this is completely unhygienic. Jesus spits on the ground, makes a small puddle of mud, then rubs it on the man’s eyes and tells him to go down to the pool and wash it off. (The distance from the temple to the pool was about 700 metres.) Then, for the first time, the man born blind sees.

This story should stun us. Do you get embarrassed by the miracles? Are we too scientific today to believe in miracles? Actually, we ought to pray for miracles more frequently.

The second part of the story looks at the attitude of the Pharisees. Their teachings said this sort of thing should not have happened – it was a Sabbath! The Pharisees actually accused Jesus of being a sinner because he “worked” on the Sabbath, and no one from God would do something like that.

When the Pharisees questioned the blind man as to who it was that had healed him, he replied that it was a prophet (verse 17). The blind man had never seen Jesus, but he had heard his name and knew that only a man sent from or by God (definition of prophet) could do such a miracle.

For Jesus to heal on the Sabbath, he was breaking the rules of the Sabbath [Exodus 20:8-11]. The Pharisees were not ready to learn something new; they were caught in long-held traditions. It is easy for us today to fall into pharisaical action and become complacent in our Christian habits.

Sometimes people who are **not** preachers tell God's story more powerfully than regular preachers. It is possible that sometimes we may be preaching without knowing it. The weak and foolish frequently are more effective than professionals at passing on God's word.

When the blind man (we never get told his name) is questioned at length by the Pharisees, he gets the better of them in the argument. When they tell him – insinuating that Jesus is not from God – that they know nothing about his (Jesus') origin, the man replies with a cutting squelch, "Now that is remarkable" (verse 30). A man who seldom spoke during his blindness now cannot stop!

Then notice how the Pharisees responded (verses 31-34). They denied the divinity of Jesus, because a person from God would never break the Sabbath rules, and in their anger and stubborn-heartedness, they made a legal decision and threw him out!

After He had heard of the Pharisees' decision, Jesus searched for the man and when He found him asked if he had heard and believed in the "Son of Man". When the healed man realized who it was that had healed him, he replied, "Lord, I believe" (John 9:38).

The formerly blind man had found the truth and became part of the early history of Christianity. This probably explains how the story became part of the Bible. God frequently uses ignored and unnamed people to build his church.

We should pray to have our eyes opened to people we frequently ignore. We need to find out what the other person's story really is.

## Discussion Questions

- 1. Read: John 9:1-41.** In the story, Jesus and His disciples are walking through a crowd of people. Jesus spots an isolated human being. Think about the many times you have walked through a crowd. What are you looking at as the mass of humanity comes up to you then passes by? What do you notice? Are you aware of the panhandlers (beggars)? Have you ever stopped to talk with such people? What happened?
- 2.** Why is it easier to talk about problems rather than people?
- 3.** Is human suffering a form of God's testing us for what our response should be?
- 4.** Do you get embarrassed by miracles?
- 5.** Why do we use, or try to use, science to explain away miracles?
- 6. Read Exodus 31:13-17.** This is what the Pharisees were taught. It seems strong, severe and binding. Yet, in this story, Jesus heals on the Sabbath. It wasn't the first time, nor the last. He broke the "rules." What was His purpose? **Compare Matthew 12:1-14.**
- 7.** Why did the Pharisees turn the 10 Commandments into inviolable laws? The Pharisees thought that a person sent from God would never break the law. Why not?
- 8.** The weak and foolish are often better at telling God's word than professionals. Why?
- 9.** What is your personal take-away from this sermon?