

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

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THE MAN BORN BLIND

Reading: John 9:1-7

Background: Firstly we need to fill in a little of the background of the lesson. John 9 gives us the incident of the healing of the man born blind. If you remember John's gospel only records 8 miracles or signs as they are called. John chooses the eight which he records very carefully because they all show a very special sign to the people of only they would think about them. The man born blind is the sixth of these signs and it has many lessons for the people then and for us today. We like the Pharisees, can be blind to God's ways so we must open our eyes and look deeply into the lesson and what it can teach us today.

On a practical note, try to think for a few minutes what it would be like to be blind. Close your eyes tightly and try to walk around the room, comb your hair. Think about how you would pour a cup of tea, know whether it was a dull day, or if your clothes were clean. There are many, many things which we take for granted that blind people have great difficulty with.

John 9 – On leaving the temple, Jesus with his disciples passed out into the streets of Jerusalem and came across a blind man seated by the roadside. With no health service, pensions or allowances to help, in those days the blind and others who because of sickness would not get work and had to beg by the wayside. The man was well known as he had been there for many years and each day he hoped that someone would take pity on him and give him a little money. The man was in a world of darkness, and had to rely heavily on the help of others.

As those who followed Jesus saw the blind man they asked Jesus who had sinned – the man or his parents? This question was because many of the Jews believed that the suffering of a person is a sign of sins they have committed. It was a prevailing superstition and so the followers brought it into the open for Jesus to tell the true story. The doctrine was completely wrong and dishonouring to God. Jesus soon made it clear that it was not the man *or* his father, and Jesus could show to those who would listen a very important lesson.

This was the reply of Jesus....

“This man has not sinned, or his parents.... I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is **day**, the night cometh when no man can work.”

This *day* of which Jesus spoke was a period during which he as the light of the Jewish world shone in the midst of the darkness of men's' minds and understanding to the true work of God, yet so many could not see it.

Remember that this brief discussion would be heard by the blind man but when they spoke about, sun, light, day... these were just words to him because he never experienced what they meant.

Then Jesus did a strange thing.... he spat on the ground and made clay which he put on the man's eyes and told him to go and wash in the pool called Siloam. What a strange way to bring about a cure, Jesus could have healed the man with just a word. Yet these anxious onlookers were to see great things.

Firstly the spit that came from his mouth represents *the teachings which he spoke*. The clay represents *fleshly man*. As the dirt was mixed with the spit it became pliable or workable so men and women who listen to God's word – the Bible and the teaching of the Master – they become pliable or workable in God's hands. Then the man is told to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, then he would be able to see. The power of Jesus was able to heal the man without the washing in the water, we all know that, so he did this to again teach a lesson.

1. Firstly the blind man would need great faith to make the effort to go and find the pool and wash as Jesus told him to.
2. In the Bible we are told that water represents the teaching of Jesus, this teaching he had from his Father so just as the water from the pool of Siloam came flowing out from the Holy Place in Jerusalem (a symbol of God's presence was the Holy Place), so the teaching of Jesus is referred to as a well of water that proceeded from the Father (John 7:16)

This teaching is able to make men and women *see* the spiritual things of God.

Back to the man born blind... he must have been a man of great faith to have made the great effort to go and wash and then the unbelievable happened, his eyes were opened and he was able to see for the first time in his life; he was completely cured and joyfully made his way home.

He was met by some of his neighbours who thought he *was* the man born blind, yet they could not understand how he could now see. They even doubted whether he was the same man, but the man soon made it quite clear that he was the man. Then came question after question as to how it happened and how was he made to see. The man soon told them it was Jesus who had put clay on his eyes, told him to wash in the pool and when he did **he was cured**, as simple as that. The people could not dispute the evidence of what they saw but where was this Jesus, he must be a man of great power, perhaps he was the Messiah they were waiting for, they must report this matter to the leaders of the nation....

The cured man was only too pleased to go with them to the Pharisees and to explain what had happened, yet how disappointed he must have been when he realised how hostile they were to Jesus, they were so jealous of the work and influence of Jesus. They realised that this Jesus was such a man of power, soon all would throng to him and they tried to discredit him by asking the cured man what had happened and then accusing Jesus of sinning because he had done the miracle on the Sabbath Day. Yet others of their party said that *if he were a sinner* God would not have given him the power to do these great miracles. The cured man told those who stood before him that Jesus *was a prophet*. This angered them even more because in their law the Pharisees taught that the prophets and priests were exempt from the Sabbath law when engaged upon the work of God and so that cancelled out the charge that Jesus was breaking the Sabbath law.

The Pharisees must act fast to try and stop the news of this miracle reaching the people and they called for the parents of the man to try and prove that it was not the man who had been born blind that was now in front of them...

...but the parents of the man were cowards. They feared the threat of the Pharisees that any who confessed that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. They did not want this to happen and so they answered that yes it was their son, but they did not know how he was able to see... the Pharisees must ask the man himself.

The Pharisees again questioned the poor man and tried to get him to say that it was not Jesus who had done the miracle and that Jesus was a sinner, but the man was not like his parents. He answered to whether Jesus

was a sinner or not... *I was once blind but now I see...* There followed a great row between the man and the rulers, he had been so happy when he was cured and yet these evil so called religious men were doing everything to try and discredit Jesus and the wonderful work he had done. The man was so angry that he spoke harshly to the Pharisees telling them that if Jesus was not from God, *he would not have been able to do the miracles.*

The Pharisees were now filled with rage against the man before them and they angrily ordered that he be excommunicated from the synagogue, telling him that he had been born in sin so how dare he think he could tell them what to do.

Sadly the man left the council deeply hurt at the evilness of the so called religious leaders of the day. Lonely and dismayed the man made his way through the city now no longer able to join his fellows in worship, but Jesus was aware of all that had happened and how the man had been courageous and so he went to find him. Now remember that the blind man had never seen Jesus.

When Jesus sat down by him he asked the question *do you believe in the Son of God?*, and the man replied, *who is he that I might believe?* The man was so grateful for all that Jesus had done and recognised that he spoke with the authority of God, he was the man who had cured him. Jesus replied *you have seen him and it is he that now talks to you*, the man said *Lord, I believe.*

The man's faith made him not only able to *see* the things around him, but to *see* or perceive the truth of God. In this miracle he represents those who are prepared to open their eyes to Divine truth. At first we are all blind to God's way and it is only God's word that enables us to *see* the wonders God has done in giving His son that we might have life.

Jesus now tried to show to the common people who would hear how evil the Pharisees were. As the light of the world Jesus came to the people with a message from God that should have enlightened them and enabled them to see what was happening around them and how the judgments of God were about to fall on a guilty nation (AD70).

The Jesus gave some very important words which I'd like you to read. John 9:39-41. When you have carefully read them, in light of the lesson we have had, tell me what Jesus is telling these Pharisees. What does it mean in the verses *they were blind; we see*, etc.

Today's lesson has many points for us to consider. Although we are all blessed with eyes to see, do we really look around us and *see* God's hand at work in the signs of the times, do we through our Bibles *see* the wonders of what God has declared He is soon to do and bring to pass on this earth? We must try to be like the blind man who had faith to obey and to believe all that was spoken to him and not to be like the religious leaders who are in darkness to God's will, their religion only being an outward show.