

Armagh Baptist Church – Sunday 29th November 2009

'I am the Light of the World – Part 5'

John ch.9:1-41

Introduction

We are currently making our way through the 'I am's of Christ in John's Gospel. The first one 'I am the Bread of Life' appeared twice in John 6 (35/48). The second one, 'I am the Light of the World' also appears twice – first of all in John ch.8:12 at the end of the story of the woman who was caught in adultery. The second time it is mentioned it's at the beginning of John ch.9 in verse 5.

When we looked at its first mention in John 8:12, we saw two things:

As the Light of the World...

- 1. Jesus exposes our sin, and**
- 2. Jesus guides our steps:**

'I am the Light of the World, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'

The amazing thing was that it wasn't the sin of the woman caught in adultery whose sins Jesus exposed that day, but the hidden sins, the secret sins, in the hearts of her pious accusers. You remember how Jesus said to them,

'If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.'

Not one of them was able to pick up even one stone and throw it at her, because in the presence of the sinless Son of God, the Light of the World, they all realized that each and every one of them was a sinner, just as much as the woman they had just thrown at Jesus' feet was. They were speechless.

You see every single one of us has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We are all sinners in God's sight. And as He shines his torchlight into our hearts and searches our hearts as the Light of the World, we have nowhere to hide. We are all guilty in the sight of a holy God.

But Jesus promises that if we will simply turn from our sin and all that we know to be wrong in our hearts and lives, and begin to trust in Him and Follow Him as our Lord and Saviour, then we will never walk in darkness, but we will have the Light of Life – abundant life here on earth, and eternal life in heaven after.

But then we saw last Sunday night that John ch.8 comes to a climax with those words that come from Jesus' lips in v.58:

'Before Abraham was born, I am!'

This is one of those occasions in John's Gospel where the name 'I am' stands on its own. Jesus was not only claiming to be God here, he was claiming to have always existed, not only in time, but throughout eternity past: He was really saying: ***'Before Abraham was, or before Abraham was ever born - I am - I have always existed, because I am God!'***

Jesus Christ is God. He always was God from eternity past, and he always will be God in eternity future. And we noticed how the Jews had got the message loud and clear by their reaction in v.59:

'At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.'

These Jewish leaders knew exactly what Jesus was claiming, so they picked up stones to stone him to death, because in their eyes he had committed the sin of blasphemy – he, as a mere man, was claiming to be God! So John ch.8 began with the attempted stoning of an adulterous woman, and it ended with the attempted stoning of the sinless Son of God!

Tonight we move on into John ch.9 and we come to the story of the man who was born blind, and here we have the second mention of Jesus' claim to be the Light of the World:

'While I am in the world, I am the Light of the World.' (John 9:5)

The context surrounding this reference is the story of the man who was born blind – and how Jesus now restores his sight.

So here we can say, not only that:

- 1. Jesus Exposes our Sin, and**
- 2. Jesus Guides our Steps, but thirdly...**
- 3. As the Light of the World, Jesus Restores our Sight.**

That's what we're going to think about tonight:

As the Light of the World, Jesus can Restore our Sight!

In this case it was physical eye-sight, in our case it can be spiritual sight.

Jesus has now slipped away from the Temple precincts. He's hiding from the Temple Guards, having escaped for his life, when the Jewish Religious Leaders had tried to stone him to death in ch.8:59.

1. The Miracle (vs.1-7)

But as he goes along (9:1) he sees a man who was blind from birth.

His Disciples ask him a question in v.2:

'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'

They seemed to have some idea that physical disability was related to sin – either on the part of the individual, or perhaps because of some sin that his parents had committed before he was born. Maybe they wondered whether this was a case of *'the sins of the fathers being visited upon their children.'* It is true that if there had been no Fall, there would have been no sin in the world, and therefore there would never have been any physical ailments,

but none of us have any right to make any direct connection between one sin, and one particular physical ailment or disability in anybody. God alone knows.

So Jesus answers their question in a very straightforward manner in v.3:

'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus,

'but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.'

Jesus says that this man was born this way – he was born blind – precisely so that the work of God could be displayed in his life at that very moment as Jesus met him. He was about to be a visual aid to all who were looking on, to all who knew him, and indeed to the Jewish Religious Leaders as well. By the end of this chapter this man would have 20:20 physical eye-sight and 20:20 spiritual vision as well, whereas the Pharisees would be confirmed as being absolutely spiritually blind!

Then Jesus says these words:

*'As long as it is day, **we** must do the work of him who sent me.*

Night is coming, when no-one can work.

While I am in the world, I am the Light of the World.'

There is a debate as to whether that should read, *'as long as it is day, **I** must do the work of him who sent me'* or *'**we** must do the work of him who sent me.'*

The fact of the matter is that as long as Jesus was in the world, He was the Light of the World, and the good works that He did while He was here, were supposed to open blinded eyes to the truth of who He was - that He was the Son of God, and that by believing in Him, men and women could get right with God. But on another occasion in Matthew ch.5 Jesus turned the tables on us! Yes it is true that He is the Light of the World in the fullest sense of that title, but then He said to his disciples in Matt 5:14 (and this includes those of us who are believers here tonight):

'You are the light of the World. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

***In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.'* (Matt 5:14-16)**

So while Jesus was in the world, **He** was the Light of the World, but now that He has gone back to heaven, **We**, as his followers, are now called to be the light of the world, pointing men and women to faith in the Son, and so to praise our Father who is in Heaven.

So the miracle, or good work, that Jesus goes on to perform in vs.6 & 7 is meant to bring light to those who are aware of it, or become aware of it later:

'Having said this, he spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 'Go' he told him, 'wash in the pool of Siloam' (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.'

In one sense the miracle is very straight forward. Jesus simply bends down in front of the man who is begging because of his blindness. He spits on the ground, makes some mud out of the dust and saliva, and then applies it to the blind man's eyes. The healing isn't instant, but Jesus does tell him to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam (an artificial pool in Jerusalem) and when he does, he comes back seeing!

Jesus was able to restore this man's eyesight. He had performed a miracle! And as with all the miracles recorded in John's Gospel, this is supposed to be a sign to the watching world that Jesus is who he claimed to be – the Great 'I am' - God come in the flesh. But does it have that affect? Well, let's see, by looking at the other people who are now mentioned in turn in this chapter...

2. The Neighbours (vs.8-12)

The neighbours, or those who already knew this man, (many of them from birth) are the first group of people to be mentioned in vs.8-12.

They would have seen him sitting begging, day in and day out, at his favourite spot in Jerusalem, probably not too far from where he lived. They knew him well. And yet there has been such a change in this man's life since he got his sight back, that there was quite a debate going on:

Some of them thought he was the same man who used to sit and beg.

Otherwise weren't quite so sure – maybe he only looks like him!

But he himself insisted – *'I am the man!'* They just couldn't believe the change *'How then were your eyes opened? They wanted to know! (v.10).*

His answer was very simple and matter of fact (v.11):

'The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see!'

But when the neighbours asked, where this man was now, he just didn't know. So the neighbours are not yet convinced by this miracle, but at least they are looking into it. They are checking out his story to see if it is true.

But then they bring him to the Pharisees, the Jewish leaders, to see what they have to say about it all. After all, these men were supposed to be their spiritual guides, so something spiritual has happened to this man, so it's worth a try...

3. The Pharisees (vs.13-18)

Maybe this was a bad move, because the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes, just happened, yet again, to be a Sabbath! So the Pharisees began by quizzing the man as to exactly how he had received his sight on the Sabbath day?

The man gives a potted version of the story he had just told the neighbours:

'He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and now I see.' (v.15).

Again, just as with the neighbours, there's another difference of opinion among the Pharisees. Some of them said,

'This man is not from God, for he doesn't keep the Sabbath!'

But some of the rest of the Pharisees couldn't figure it out:

'How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?'

So the Pharisees were divided among themselves as well as the neighbours! They accepted that a miracle had taken place, but they couldn't reconcile it with the fact it had happened on the Sabbath! They were a bit short-sighted to say the least!

4. The Man Himself (v.17)

Since the miracle that Jesus had performed had already divided the neighbours and the Pharisees in their opinions about it, they now turn to ask the man himself, what he thought about it all in v.17:

'What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened' – after all!

But the only conclusion the man had come to by this stage was,

'He is a Prophet.'

That's a good start, but it's not the whole story. It will only be later on in this chapter when he meets Jesus for a second time, that he comes to believe in who he really is. But for now, he's got as far as thinking Jesus is a prophet.

But now the Jews, who are puzzled by all of this, begin to question if the man was really blind in the first place at all or not! They become very skeptical. So who better to ask than the man's parents? Surely they should know whether he had been blind or not. So they send for the parents...

5. The Parents (vs.18-23)

1. 'Is this your son?' They asked. (v.19)

2. 'Is this the one you say was born blind?'

In other words are you really sure he was blind?

Maybe you're only saying so to make money from his begging!

3. 'How is it that now he can see?'

Three blunt questions, from the Pharisees to the parents.

To which they give 3 equally blunt answers:

1. 'We know he is our son.' (v.20) – we're sure about that.

2. 'We know he was born blind.' (v.20) – we're also sure about that.

But as for the third question...

'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.'

They genuinely didn't know the answer to the third question, how he had received his sight. But they were also afraid to say much more (v.22) because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, because it had become widely known that the Jewish leaders had passed a ruling saying that anyone who

acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah (the Christ) would be excommunicated – they'd be put out of the synagogue. They would be ostracized from the community. They would be cut off from their people.

The Pharisees weren't just skeptical about Jesus anymore, they were actually now living in fear of him. They were beginning to rule their people with a rod of iron. Dare anyone step out of line, dare anyone even think that Jesus might be our long-awaited Messiah and we will put them out of the church – we'll shut them out of the synagogue. That was just more than most people could bear. So the parents were passing it back to their adult son: *'He is of age; ask him.'* That brings us then to the point in the story where the Jewish leaders haul this man back in again, and they ask him to sit in judgement on Jesus! But that gives him the opportunity to give a very clear word of testimony about Jesus:

6. The Testimony (vs.24-34)

It's almost like a court room setting. Perhaps he is standing now before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Ruling Council – all because he is now able to see!

He has been summonsed (v.24)

He is solemnly charged to tell the truth – *'Give glory to God...'* (v.24)

They make their opening statement: *'We know this man is a sinner!'* (v.24)

And they wait to hear what this man will say about Jesus:

'Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know.' (i.e. That's not for me to judge).

'One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!' (i.e. That's all I know).

That was this man's testimony – *'Once I was blind, but now I can see!'*

That was John Newton's testimony – that old slave ship captain – who had transported thousands upon thousands of black Africans from Africa to the Caribbean in shackles and cramped conditions in all kinds of disease and rat infested ships, and then transported goods and wealth back with him from there to the busy ports of England, as part of the terrible slave trade over 200 years ago. But as he passed around the coast of North Donegal, in his ship one dark stormy night, thinking he was going to drown, that old foul mouthed sailor cried out to God, and God saved him! Later he wrote those words we'll be singing later:

*'Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
that saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.'*

And in a sense, this man who was born blind, could have penned those words. He couldn't tell you very much about Jesus. He didn't know all the theology, but he did have a testimony – *'I once was blind, but now I see!'*

You might not be able to stand up and preach a sermon, but if you're a believer, you do have a testimony – never be afraid to share it. Keep it simple, but don't keep it to yourself! *'I once was spiritually blind, but now I can see!'*

But these cynical Pharisees have not finished with him yet:
In v.26 they try to get him to answer again:

'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?'

They seem very interested, but the man is getting a bit fed-up, because he says in v.27:

*'I have told you already and you didn't listen!
Why do you want to hear it again?'*

'Do you want to become his disciples, too?'

Oh, now he's done it – that's just gone a wee bit close to the bone! One of the Pharisees become a disciples of Jesus? How dare he insult them like that!?

But he gets a reaction in v.28:

*'They hurled insults at him and said, 'You are this fellow's disciple!'
(Or 'You can keep his discipleship for yourself!')*

'We are disciples of Moses!'

*'We know God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow,
we don't even know where he comes from!'*

Back in ch.1:17, John told us right at the start of his Gospel that:

'The Law was given through Moses;

grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.'

These Pharisees were stubbornly sticking as disciples of the Law of Moses, but they knew absolutely nothing about Grace, or about Truth, because they are found only in the Lord Jesus Christ. They were offered these things many times, not least in chapter 8 which we have just looked at on recent Sunday nights, but they would have none of it! They were disciples of Moses, but they had no time to be disciples of Jesus - they knew nothing of grace or truth!

The man who was born blind, was only getting warmed up now. Look at v.30:
'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.'

And so, with simple clear logic, this simple, un-schooled man, defeats the Pharisees in their own argument. They claimed that they didn't know where Jesus had come from; he simply stated the obvious – no man has ever restored sight to anymore born blind – so this man must come from God!

Now the Pharisees are really angry in v.34:

'You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!'

And they threw him out – of the synagogue!

So these sinful Pharisees certainly showed their true colours now.

They believed this man was born blind, because he was steeped in sin from birth. In other words they believed that physical disability was a direct result of his own sin! These men were supposed to be God's representatives on earth! They were anything but. They were heartless and ruthless, and now they cast him out of the Jewish faith. They have no more time for him or his testimony!
But it's at that point that Jesus comes back into our story...

7. The Lesson (vs.35-41)

No sooner had Jesus heard that the Pharisees had thrown this poor man out, than Jesus went looking for him and found him. And when he found him, he asked him a straightforward question:

'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' (v.35)

The man replied:

'Who is he, sir? Tell me so that I may believe in him.' (v.36)

To which Jesus said in words reminiscent of the Woman at the Well story:

'You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.' (v.37)

Then the man said:

'Lord, I believe.' And he worshipped him. (v.38)

That's all it took. And that's all it takes for any of us.

So this story, that began with a man who was physically blind and spiritually blind, ends with him not only having his physical eyesight restored, but Jesus, the Light of the World, has opened his blinded eyes to the truth of who He is too, and he believes in him as his Lord and Saviour.

The man who was born blind now has 20:20 vision in every sense of that term, but the Pharisees who sat in judgement over him in this story, are more blind than ever they were. They were 'blind leaders of the blind' as Jesus said

And so the lesson of this chapter is spelled out for us in vs.37-41. Jesus said:

'For judgement I have come into this world,

so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.'

Some Pharisees heard him say this and asked the question:

'What? Are we blind too?' (v.40)

To which Jesus replied:

'If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin;

But now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.' (v.41)

Conclusion

Your physical eyesight tonight might be perfect.

But what about your spiritual insight? Do you know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God? Do you know that He is the Saviour of the World? Well then, if you know that, what's stopping you from putting your trust in Him? Either you believe that and see who Jesus is clearly, or else you're the blindest person in the world; and there's nothing anyone else can do for you!

