

May 20, 2018 The Mystery Pt. 3 John 9:35-41

It is my premise throughout this mini-series, that the miracles of Jesus specifically, and the miracles of God and his servants in the Bible in general, are mysterious to us. What I mean by that is that we never fully understand what happened. All of the Bible stories that involve the miraculous element have this in common. There is someone at the heart of the stories, at the heart of the experience, who discovers the power, the love and the grace of God and who in the midst of that discovery accepts both the reality of God, and the fact that HE is intimate with us, close by, "HE leads HIS dear children along."

Miracles do not simply mean someone is delivered out of some kind of trouble. Often that is what the story conveys. But at the heart of the experience is an undeniable moment in which someone believes...believes strongly....believes to the extent that his or her life is literally changed. The person who was at ground zero when the miracle occurred is not made perfect. Rather that individual discovers a change in direction. They believe and their faith in God becomes at very least, one of the most important parts of living. The miracles are not about understanding, they are rather about the discovery of the treasure which is faith in the living God, in Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

John chapter 9 contains this miracle story about a man born blind. Jesus is walking by the place where he is

begging and to make a long story short, Jesus heals him. For the blind man, it was a life altering experience. But not everyone was so moved. Some of the witnesses were certain of what had happened. There were others who were not even convinced the healed man was the man born blind. They said, "He just looks like him," even though the healed man insisted on both counts...he was born blind, and he could now see. It makes the point that miracles are not understood, totally explained, reduced to logic. There are those who say, "I was there!" And there are those who whether they say it or not, are thinking, "That's impossible."

This healing of the man born blind gets even more complicated when the Pharisees get involved. There can be no disputing that their understanding of such tragedies as illness, is that somebody sinned. Illness, handicaps, even sudden death were viewed by them as the judgement of God. The victim is getting what he or his family deserves. But there was another complicating set of factors. The Pharisees had already decided that Jesus was trouble. Anyone promoting HIS cause, or embracing HIS ministry could be expelled from their local synagogue. Add to that the fact that Jesus did this work, healing the man born blind, on the Sabbath. To the Pharisees that presented a measure of proof that Jesus was not a good Jew. Anyone who embraced Jesus ministry was suddenly under suspicion. In this case that included the man who was born blind. It also included his extended family. In the end the man who was born blind was expelled from his local synagogue.

That is where this 3rd part of the story begins. Judgement has been rendered. The man born blind has discovered the cost of publicly defending Jesus and HIS ministry. On the way by notice this. Remember the fear among the 12 at the time of the crucifixion? Remember their going into hiding? They had witnessed individuals paying a price for embracing Jesus and HIS followers. Peter, James and John and the rest had reason to be fearful. In the Book of Acts we read the story of the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian cause. Every follower of the risen Christ was aware that promoting the cause of Jesus, was dangerous and involved very real risk.

The man who was born blind, and whom Jesus healed, said he did not know where Jesus was. Jesus had moved on. As this 3rd chapter of the story opens, Jesus has come looking for him, and has found him again for one simple reason. Somebody has told Jesus about the healed man's being expelled from his local faith community. This is an important detail. Jesus has come looking for the healed man. There is unfinished business to be taken care of. This healed man, needs to be cared for. And that is precisely why Jesus has sought him out.

Remember at the beginning of this 3 chapter story, the disciples asked the question, "Who sinned, causing this man to be born blind? Was it he? Was it his parents? Jesus had said, 'This is not about sin and judgement. This man was born blind

“so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” The man was healed. Behold the power of God. This formerly blind man is like a billboard, advertising the grace of God. Pressed and threatened by the Pharisees he says, “One thing I know. I was blind and now I see.” He defends the power of God that has touched his life through the person of Jesus Christ. Attacked and threatened, he lectures the Pharisees who cannot see that this healing is the work of God made visible before them. And he is punished for his insistence that he has been healed by the power of God, and that Jesus is the gracious instrument of the Lord God Almighty!

Jesus has not abandoned him. He is the good shepherd seeking out this lamb that has been wounded defending the God who changes lives. When Jesus finds this healed man who can now see Jesus eye to eye, Jesus asks him a question. “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” To us it seems a strange question. To us it would seem a lot more clear if Jesus asked, “Do you believe in me?” Jesus asks the question as he does because he respects the blind man’s Jewishness. He has been cast out of his local synagogue, for defending and embracing Jesus ministry to him. The question means, “Do you believe in the Messiah?” And the healed man understands the question. His reply is, “Who is he, (the Son of Man, the Messiah). Tell me that I may believe in him.” Jesus reply is, “You have now seen him, in fact, he is the one speaking to you.” John tells us this whole long and complicated story to say, this was one of those moments when Jesus told a healed blind man that

HE, Jesus, is the Messiah for which Israel has been waiting and looking. And the man who had been born blind, whom Jesus healed, said, "I believe." And he did not just say it with words. He worshipped Jesus. The Gospels are written in Market Place Greek. The word used here means to express honour and respect by bending the knee. John Calvin wrote this: "What then is meant by worship? The blind man, convinced that Jesus was the Son of God, nearly lost the command of himself, and in rapturous admiration bowed down before him." (Calvin's Commentaries John 9:38). I will go one step further. The Wise Men who followed a star to find the newborn Jesus. They said they wanted to worship HIM. And when they found HIM, they took out their gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh and presented them on their knees. I picture the blind man, now healed, before Jesus, his head bowed, his hands together. Why? It is not about understanding. It is much more mysterious. This one thing he knows, he was blind, and now he can see. "The power of God has been displayed in his life. He cannot deny this. It is not about understanding, He believes.

There is one thing more. The Pharisees are present for all of this. They hear every word that Jesus speaks, and they see everything this healed man does. Jesus says, "For judgement I have come into this world, so that the blind will see, and those who see will become blind." Some one of the group of Pharisees just could not leave it alone. So he opened his mouth and said, "What are we blind too?" Jesus reply is a

sad comment. "If you were blind you would not be guilty of sin, but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."

John remembers the tension. He remembers being afraid. But he also remembers, he had seen and heard all of this unfold. The power of God being shown and disclosed in the life of a man who had been born...blind...who now sees so much more than mere details.

Let us pray;

Away from the mire, and away from the clay,
God leads his dear children along;
Away up in glory, eternity's day,
God leads his dear children along.

Some through the waters, some through the flood.
Some through the fire, but all through the blood;
Some through great sorrow but God gives a song,
In the night season and all the day long.

Lord Jesus;

We find it hard when reason and understanding collide with faith and your presence in our lives. We have a tendency to want to choose between the two, to set aside matters of belief in favour of rationality, or to so embrace faith, that it becomes blind to real needs and circumstances. Grant that we may continually have our eyes opened by your

redeeming love, your grace all sufficient, and the presence of your healing Spirit. Amen