

September 25, 2022 The Wonder Of It All John 9:1-41

The event is fairly straight forward. Jesus is walking in Jerusalem. He sees a man who was born blind. It was his disciples who asked the basic question. "Who was it that sinned, this man or his parents?" There was a fundamental understanding in the theology of the time in the Jewish community that illness, especially, life changing illness, was the direct result of sin on the part of the people impacted, and that it was God's judgement upon them.

Jesus surprises everyone when he announces, that sin had nothing to do with the man's fate. He declares that it happened, the man was born blind, for a greater purpose and reality, namely "so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." (John 9:3) As a matter of fact, Jesus says in the 4th verse what amounts to, this is a matter of destiny. This is a moment where it will be made plain that Jesus is the light of the world. So he spits on the ground, makes some mud with the combination of the dirt and his spittle and he puts it on the man's eyes. His instructions are that the man should go to the pool of Siloam and wash it off. There is not a detail that is out of place. Siloam means sent. The man obeyed Jesus, and came away from the experience seeing for the first time in his life. And that is the point of the miracle. For the man who was born blind, for his parents, it is a life altering experience.

I have stood on the ground where that pool of Siloam was in the time of Jesus. You cannot see it today because in all that has happened in the years between then and now the site has been buried. But the details of the location are absolutely understood and recognized by the government of the state, and the government of the holy city. Our tour guide proclaimed, "It was right here." We were literally walking in the footsteps of Jesus.

However, between the man's excitement and joy at being able to see, and the fact that he had friends and family, word quickly spread about what had occurred. His neighbours and those who had seen him begging said this man was born blind. A miracle has happened. There were also some, who were skeptical, who said, "Well, he claimed to be that man, but in fact he just looks like the man who was smitten, and made a living by begging." But the man, and we are never told his name, insisted, "I am that man!" And of course his insistence led to a whole conversation. People wanted the facts. What happened? "How were your eyes opened."

And the man is only too happy to tell the story to anyone who wants to hear it. "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!" I added the exclamation mark. I do not believe for a moment the man was cool and just shared the facts. I believe he was excited. I believe he was bouncing around. I believe he found it

impossible to believe that anyone would not be excited at the wonder that had occurred.

The details may seem strange to us. There is no question, that if the story is true, a miracle occurred. And of course given that we are talking about an encounter with Jesus, and given who Jesus is...not just the son of Mary and Joseph...but the Son of the living God come to redeem the world...HE has a track record. Even the Pharisees recognized...how to put it...Jesus did this kind of thing. Signs. Wonders. Miracles. And someone asked the question, "Where is this man?" And the man who had been healed, who can see, who is marveling at the details of the world around him, at the colours of a sparrow is absolutely honest. "I don't know." Here is the thing. The man's testimony is simple. I was blind. I can see. For the first time! And...I obeyed Jesus. There is an ugly side to the story.

They brought the man who had been born blind, to the Pharisees. Members of the Rabbinical Council of Jerusalem. And one of the first things that comes out is that that day, the day on which Jesus encountered this man and made the mud and slathered it on his eyes and sent him to the Pool of Siloam, the pool of destiny, Sent, was the Sabbath. The Pharisees want to get this one fact straight, clear, crystal.

It seems like such a simple question. "How did you receive your sight?" And now the fat is in the fire. Controversy. Jesus made mud. That's work. Jesus may even have healed the

man. That's definitely work. The pronouncement is made that Jesus cannot be a man from God, because HE does not keep the Sabbath. HE breaks the commandment. But even in that priestly circle there is division. We know that Joseph of Arimathea became a follower of Jesus. We know that Nicodemus was a follower of Jesus. There is a problem of doctrine here. "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" That is an important piece of information. Some priests saw the problem clearly, some Pharisees saw the problem clearly. How can someone who sins, do such miraculous signs? There were Pharisees who did not question what has happened, I mean the man is standing right in front of them!

Finally some one of the Pharisees present turns back to the man who was born blind but now sees and asks the question: "What have you to say about him...Jesus? It was your eyes he opened." The man offers his opinion freely and quickly. "He is a prophet." But there is a significant number of the Pharisees who simply do not believe the man had been blind in the first place, or healed in the second. So they send for his parents.

The man who has been healed is not a child. He is an adult. His parents are aging. And 2 questions are put to the parents. "Is this the one you say was born blind?" And by the way, if he was, "How is it that he can now see?" The parents respond with a clear statement. "This is our son, and he was born blind. But how he can now see, or who opened his eyes, we don't know." They were not there. And they add, "Ask him.

He is of age, He can speak for himself.” And John tells us they were afraid of the Pharisees because it was well known that they had already decided that anyone suggesting Jesus is the Christ....the Messiah will be put out of the local synagogue.

So they turn again to the one who was born blind. The Pharisees begin with a statement. “Give glory to God. We know this man (Jesus) is a sinner.” The man who was healed responds with “Whether he is a sinner or not, I do not know. But I do know this, I was blind but now I see.” He is starting to lose patience, and he is on the edge of losing his temper. When they ask him to tell them yet again what happened, he loses it. He does not want to repeat a story he knows they do not believe. He challenges them, “Do you want to become his disciples?” The Pharisees become insulting, they suggest the man is a disciple of Jesus and this whole thing is a put up job. They claim they do not know where Jesus came from.

And the healed man becomes calm. He replies what amounts to, “Funny thing. 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 someone healing someone born blind. If this man were not from God he could do nothing.”

The Pharisees become angry, and insulting and they physically throw the man out of their quarters. You would think that would be the end of the story. But it is not.

Jesus learns what happened. HE finds the man and HE asks a question. "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

The one who was born blind replies, "Who is he? Tell me that I may believe in him,"

Jesus responds, "You have seen him. He is the one speaking to you."

John says the man replied, "I believe. And he worshipped Jesus."

In the Bible, signs and wonders serve one purpose. The person who sees the miracle, the sign, the wonder crosses a line from not believing to what only can be described as faith. Moses saw a burning bush that was not consumed by the flames that enveloped it. As a result he went to Egypt. He led slaves to freedom. He led them through the sea on dry land. This man who had been born blind becomes a believer. A follower. The hymn says " O the wonder of it all, The wonder of it all! Just to think that God loves me."

Signs...Wonders....Response. God loves you. Jesus loves me, this I know.

Let us Pray;

O God, our Creator, Redeemer and Friend. YOU do wonderful things. YOU give us signs of YOUR presence. Sometimes we do not notice. But sometimes we are gripped by

the very wonder of it all. Give us eyes to see. And warm our hearts that we may celebrate. O the wonder of it all, just to think that YOU love us so. Amen