

# Session 12

May 17, 2020

## Unit 2: Jesus Encounters . . .

### The Man Born Blind

Jesus offers sight to the spiritually blind.

#### The Word

John 9:1-12, 34-41

### Engage the Word

#### SICKNESS AND SIN

##### John 9:1-3

The man born blind was “of age” (9:21), which could indicate he may have been a beggar in Jerusalem for years. The disciples’ question suggests that some then thought prenatal sin possible. Also, did the sins of the parents bring punishment on a child while still in its mother’s womb? Both positions present a skewed sense of God. Does God bring judgment on an unborn infant before the child can know right and wrong? Do physical limitations derive from the sin of another (e.g., the parents in this case)? Jesus quickly and firmly rejected this assumption. So how to understand verse 3? Was this blind man kept in reserve for many years to become an exhibit of some sort to achieve God’s purpose in this reported encounter? Or did the meeting of Jesus and the man become included in John’s gospel because of the result here reported? The Greek text may be taken either way. But the second, the “result” sense, provides some space for understanding God (and Jesus) as acting in healing ways in the flow of life, rather than one who orchestrates, or even manipulates, events.

#### DAY, NIGHT, LIGHT

##### John 9:4-5

Jesus called the disciples to a deepened shared ministry with Him. The Greek text can be read as “we must work the works.” ? Forms of the word translated as “work” or “works” occur four times in these verses. The time to do the works of God, Jesus stated, was during the “day.” Times of “night” would come when ministry would become even more challenging. Does John point

readers to a later statement in the gospel, perhaps foreshadowing 13:30? There the betrayer, Judas, left the evening meal. John reports the tragic reality, “Judas...went out. And it was night.”

The enduring hope of Jesus’ coming into the world appears in the declaration “I am the light of the world” (also John 8:12). The word “light” occurs 25 times in 16 verses in John’s gospel. Almost always it is a reference, directly or indirectly, to Jesus.

## **GO, WASH, WHO DID THIS? John 9:6-12**

This healing came soon, but not directly at the touch of Jesus. The healing came as the man obeyed Jesus’ commands to “Go” and “wash.” Jesus sent the man to the Pool of Siloam, about a half-mile south from the temple. After this trek and washing in the pool, the man could see. John reports confusion over the man’s identity. Some claimed this was the same man who had been blind, others that he only looked like that man. But the man who now could see insisted emphatically, “I am the man.”

John reports an uneven response as to how Jesus was understood. The healed one first called Jesus only “the man,” but when pressed declared Jesus “a prophet” (v. 17). Some affirmed Jesus as “Messiah” (v. 22) “from God” (v. 33), though the Pharisees deemed Him “not from God” (9:16). Jesus, in a later discussion with the man, refers to himself as “the Son of Man.” These titles are impressive. But others spoke of Jesus as “a sinner” (vv. 24, 25, 31). This mixed review depicts the faith of the crowd and the healed man as moving in opposite directions. Three times the healed man confesses his ignorance (vv. 12, 25, 36), yet he is, ironically, growing in his knowledge of Jesus. At the same time the Pharisees, confident they know who Jesus is (or isn’t), ironically and tragically descend further into ignorance.

## **John 9:34-41**

The Pharisees embraced their ignorance while increasingly rejecting Jesus. The once blind man is thrown out of the proceedings. The outcome for the Pharisees and those who followed them was a deepening rift between the synagogue and those who affirmed Jesus as Messiah. Blindness that comes unbidden is tragic. Spiritual blindness that is chosen is more tragic still, especially when the spiritual darkness develops from one’s claims to see.

John presents Jesus as the pursuing Savior. When Jesus heard that the former blind man had been expelled by the Jewish leaders, Jesus searched until He found the man. Jesus comes in grace to find and invite people to himself, to come to faith.

The closing scene of John 9 demonstrates the man increasing in faith in Jesus. Three times the word “believe” spoken by, or to, the once blind man, seems also to draw the reader into the matter, challenging us to believe. Proper faith will lead to worship of Jesus (v. 38). Sadly, entrenched refusal to believe in Jesus comes with a price. By claiming to see, yet being spiritually blind, people can move deeper into “guilt [that] remains.”

## **Did You Know?**

Virtually every chapter of the Gospel of John contains one or several names or titles for Jesus. All four gospels consistently address the key question about Jesus, “Who is this?” Some of the titles, like “Lord,” “Savior,” and “Son of God” were used of Roman political leaders. These same titles being ascribed to Jesus could have been viewed by Rome as subversive.

## **Think About It**

Chapters 9 and 10 are a unit, and so are best considered together. The giving of sight to the man born blind not only illustrates the shining Light into darkness (1:5), but also becomes the occasion for the beginning of the new community (9:34). The community is composed of those who believe in Jesus as Lord (9:38), and those whose Lord is the Shepherd of the sheep (19:2). [Beacon Bible Commentary: John, Acts (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1965), 113.]

## **Reflect**

In what ways do you need God to touch your spiritual eyesight this week?

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