

Sermon- A Jesus Encounter That Baffles the Neighborhood

Scripture: John 9:6-12

Sunday, October 14,

2018

Last Sunday our youth Pastor Abraham exhorted us on engaging in spiritual warfare. This is where the rubber meets the road in the most intense aspects of our walk with Christ. I hope that in the days to come we will continue to develop our skills and capacity in this area. Today we are going to shift back to our journey through the Gospel of John. Before Jesus engaged the man whose life he was going to turn upside down, he opened the can on two big topics, the question of innocent suffering and the fact that there is a limited window of opportunity to do God's work. Therefore, there is an urgency to God's work. So on that note, without further delay we are going to look at a remarkable interaction Jesus has with a man who was born blind.

What you are about to see in this story is I believe the most exciting thing about the human experience. In the midst of the suffering and uncertainties of life, the God who created this whole universe, walks into our midst, turns his face upon us and if permitted is willing to do a miracle in your life. Just at a look at what happens in John chapter 9. Now in our John 9 narrative, the blind man does not ask Jesus to be healed, he does not have any friends who ask Jesus to heal this man and Jesus also does not ask him if he wants to be healed. What happens is this. When Jesus sees the man born blind, after he answers the disciples questions he spits on the ground, makes a paste with the mud and applies it to the man's eyes. Then he asks the man to do something. He tells him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. We don't know how much the blind man was aware of what Jesus was doing, or how much faith he had in Jesus. But we do know this. He obeyed Jesus and went and washed as he was told. And what was the result? He suddenly opened his eyes and he was able to see the world. Something he could never

do. For someone who lived 2000 years ago, being liberated of this visual handicap meant that everything changed in his life. He could move from being a beggar to someone who could work like everyone else. He would go and worship in the temple, have a family and be part of respectable society. This was a transformation that was so big that it is hard to imagine for any of us.

Now remember, we know that Jesus can heal just by telling him, be healed, right? So if Jesus heals by some specific action, he is trying to use that action as a teaching moment. So what do you think Jesus was saying by spitting into the earth and making a paste? Well, do remember in Genesis where God forms the man out of clay and breathes into his nostrils to give him life? Well, Jesus was saying. I am the same person who did that. This man was born without eyes. But I want to show you how God created all the parts of the human body. He takes the earth, adding something of his own self to it and there you see the result.

Now Jesus also sent this man on a trip to the pool of Siloam before he had his sight restored, right? So why did He do this? Well, if you have been following this sermon series through John you may remember that just a little while ago when Jesus was at the festival of booths he presented the first two of his I AM sayings. Remember I had shared about the water ritual at the festival of booths? The previous night, the priest would go and collect this jug of water from the pool of Siloam and at the time of the festival, this water would be carried in a procession and finally poured out on the altar at the courtyard of the temple. Remember I had mentioned that with the water ceremony as the back drop Jesus had Jesus declared Himself to be the “living water”? So now once again he is connecting the healing water from the pool of Siloam to himself by telling this man to go wash in the water of Siloam, once again reinforcing the idea that He is the living water and the true source of the healing that came from the pool of Siloam.

And not just that. Remember at the festival the Jews also lit ceremonial lamps to remind themselves of their dependence on God as He led them as a pillar of fire by night during their wilderness wandering days? So remember with the ceremonial lamps lit as the backdrop Jesus had declared that He was the light of the world? Now by giving this man his sight he was once again reinforcing the idea that He was the light of the world.

Imagine this, in the course of just one healing miracle, by the way Jesus performed it, he not only demonstrated the power that he had but he also communicating something about the nature of God. You see Jesus did this miracle in this specific way so that one day, people would learn from it something about the very nature of God. That God was not only the creator of the world but also someone who when working with a willing individual can heal them of the biggest things that need healing in their lives and can also give them the capacity to see things they could never see before. Because God in Jesus is the living water who heals and the Light of the world that gives us the capacity to see things like we have never been able to see before. You see how every act of Jesus is so rich in meaning and power and purpose.

OK so what happens to this man who was healed? That is what the neighbors are wondering now. You see for the neighbors; this man was just a blind beggar by the roadside. His blindness and begging was what defined this man as far as they were concerned. So what happens when overnight the man is neither blind nor sitting there and begging? That has got to be confusing to them right? The neighbors can't wrap their heads around what they are seeing. So some of them come up with a theory. Their theory is that this man is not the blind beggar but someone totally different, who looks like the beggar they knew. Other people say no, he is the same person.

As they are discussing this to settle the transformed man's identity issue, the question that arises from their discussion is this. If you are the same person as the blind man we knew from birth, then "who healed you?". Now the healed man did not know anything

about the healer except his name, what he did, what he asked him to do and the effect obeying this man had on his life.

Now the neighbors are all curious and excited and their minds begin to race with questions and possibilities. Maybe they were thinking, if this man called Jesus can do so much for this former beggar, what can he do for me, right? They want to find out, so they ask the question, “where is he now?”

This is where we are going to stop in the Gospel narrative. But at this point I am going to revisit the encounter of the blind beggar with Jesus and just rehearse with you, the high level action. It goes like this. Jesus encounters a blind beggar, a person who he knew somehow was blind from birth. Jesus was with his disciples and was going to use this as a teaching moment. Jesus then performs an action for the blind man. After that, Jesus asks the blind man to take a step in faith and leaving it as a surprise as to what would happen if the man obeyed Jesus. The man obeys and what is the result? He is able to see! Something he was never able to from birth. Then he goes and tells the neighbors and the whole neighborhood is baffled by the change they see. Now the neighbors become super curious as to who this amazing healer is. They are told what the healed man knows about this name called Jesus. Now they can't wait to find out where Jesus is.

So what relevance does this healing miracle have for you and me? The relevance I believe is this. When you and I look back at our lives, as someone who has also had Jesus encounters, what do you remember of your encounter with Jesus? How has Jesus changed your life? What difference has Jesus made in your life that caused people to ask you the question, “what happened to you?” And maybe even “who healed you?” and may be even the question, “where can we find this Jesus?”

Well, I want to share a story of such a transformation I heard at the conference I was at in South Dakota this past week. There was this International student who was being ministered to by the ISI team in Arizona. Now usually the students that we work with,

when they come to the US especially from Indian don't want to hear anything about faith especially because they are warned before they come to the US to keep their distance from Christians because they are going to try to convert them. They are usually advised to go get whatever free stuff the Christians are giving out but then to stay away and focus on their studies. So we usually take years to build a relationship with these students before we find out if they have any spiritual interest at all. But this student was different. Now even though he comes from a Hindu family, his mother was a Christian. She had prayed for him for many years, shared the Gospel with him and invited him to give his life to Christ. But year after year, being a very cocky and proud Indian boy, he had always thought that he was too cool to go for his mom's old fashioned God talk. He was a smart kid with a computer science degree and cool enough to get admitted to a good university in the US to pursue his dreams. He was an elite kid and had an elite life ahead of him. He did not need any of this dependence on Jesus talk. So he got his US Visa, packed his bags and got on the plane to live his dream life. But you see. If he thought he was cool, God is even cooler right? So this is what happened next. When this boy was on the long flight from India to the US, something very strange happened. He started getting some kind of a panic attack. He became really anxious. His mind began to swim with all kinds of thoughts. Suddenly he lost all his cockiness and confidence and self-assurance . Suddenly, he was desperate for some peace and assurance. And there in his turmoil he remembered what his mother had told him about Jesus. He remembered being asked to pray to Jesus. He remembered his mother saying that Jesus would be there to rescue him from his troubles. And suddenly, just like that he lost all his resistance and he prayed to ask Jesus into his life. Jesus came into his life and all his anxiety vanished. Suddenly, he had a peace and great sense of hope. But now he could not wait to talk to people who knew Jesus as well and help him get even more connect with Jesus. So you can imagine how surprise the ISI people were who thought they had come to pick up a Hindu student who was just arriving from India! But you know what?

Can you imagine who would have been even more surprised that the ISI people? Why all his friends back home but also his mom who even if she had faith that God would do this one day, I am sure was surprised at when and how God chose to transform her son. But the point I want to focus on is this, once that Jesus encounter took place, his boys life was so radically transformed that everyone who knew him was asking, the same questions the neighbors asked the guy who was blind. What happened to you? Who transformed your life? I am also sure that one day people will be asking him, how can we meet this person who transformed your life.

I want to bring this back to us. The question I want to challenge you with today is this. Have you had a powerful encounter with Jesus that changed the trajectory of your life? If you did, how did the people around you react? If this transformation happened a long time ago, are you still willing to share it with others? But I also want to ask you this. If Jesus is the willing water and the light of the world and he has been dwelling in you for some time, have you experienced that healing from his living water? Are you able to see things you were not able to see before. Are you willing to reach out to hurting people from the place of wholeness that Jesus has given you. Are you willing to share your perspective from the sight he has given you? I don't think I need to tell you that there is plenty of wounds in this world that need the healing touch that Jesus wants you to be a channel of. There is plenty on confusion in this world that Jesus wants to dispel with the spiritual clarity and discernment, Jesus has given you.

If you know Jesus, remember, He wants you to be a conduit of spiritual life and healing and discernment in the brokenness and confusion of this world. Because Jesus Christ is the Light of this world. Jesus Christ is the Living Water and you are his agents. If you don't know Christ, would you not want to know Christ in this way? Wouldn't you want to have a powerful encounter with this incredible man that will then have the whole

neighborhood baffled? If you do then pray for such an encounter and come and talk to some one in church who has been there. I hope you do. Let us pray.