

## Sermon- The Seeing That Comes after Believing

Scripture: John 9:34-41

Sunday, November 18, 2018

Today we are in the last portion of the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of John and the last portion of Jesus' miracle of healing the man born blind. This is my 5<sup>th</sup> sermon on the topic. In the previous 3 sermons on the topic, the scriptures we have been working with had Jesus nowhere in the scene. The last time we saw Jesus was way back in verse 7. That is about to change now because Jesus is right back in the action in today's scripture starting at verse 35. What we are going to look at the next chapter of our friend's journey with Jesus after his first life-changing healing Jesus encounter.

What is happening in verse 35 is an incredibly beautiful moment. Think about this. Our friend in verse 34 has just been harshly thrown out of the synagogue which he should have just gained access to because he was healed and can see now. But just as you think this is a terrible thing to have happened to our friend something amazing happens. He has his next Jesus encounter.

If you look at this carefully in verse 35 you see that this was not a coincidence. Jesus, we are told hears about this man's situation, that he was thrown out of the synagogue and chooses to go find this man at this time. The irony of this moment, when this man is thrown out of the synagogue then he finds God and the timing, when this man is down in the dumps, that is when he has his God encounter, make this is a very powerful moment. But there is something else that makes this moment beautiful. It is the word "found". If you look at the very beginning of John, right in chapter 1 you encounter this word for the first time in John. In that story ironically, Andrew goes to his brother and tells him "we have found the Messiah". From the disciple's perspective, it looks like they have done the finding. But this is a very limited perspective. If you want to know what is really going on, you have to go to Jesus' perspective. And from Jesus' perspective, He is

the one who does the finding. Remember the disciples did not chose Jesus. Jesus chose his disciples. Now giving the fact that Jesus is God and even in his limited human form he has full access to God the Father who is everywhere and knows everything. So you may be wondering, “what does it mean for God or Jesus to “find” someone?” What it means is this. The moment of “finding” is a special moment chosen by God the Father for a particular human being to have a special God encounter. All other times God is there but the individual is not aware of God’s presence. So coming back to our friend’s situation, he would say, “just as I was thrown out of the synagogue and was losing hope in the possibilities that my new life would bring, an amazing thing happened. I had another life altering Jesus encounter”.

The rest of this sermon is about discovering what went down in that special Jesus encounter. Now this encounter begins with Jesus asking our friend, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” This requires a little explanation. After all what does the phrase “Son of Man” mean? In the Gospel of John this phrase is used about 6 times<sup>1</sup>. I am not going to list all the instances here but in chapter 3, the first time it is used it is goes like this. *<sup>13</sup> No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man<sup>[e]</sup> has come down from heaven. <sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.*<sup>[4]</sup>

I have all the instances this phrase is used mentioned in my sermon manuscript if you want to look at it. But the meaning the author intends for Son of Man is- the divine being of God who has come into the world as a human being and who gave his life for human beings. Now our friend would have had a more limited perspective than the author obviously. If you look just within our passage, our friend is thinking “God in human form” when he hears Son of Man. So for our friend Jesus’ question, “do you believe in the Son of Man?” would be the same as, “do you believe that there is a

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:13–14; 5:53; 6:27; 12:23; 13:31; cf. also Matt 9:6

person who is God in human form?” To that question, our friend says, “Who is he, sir? I want to believe that there is such a person”. Jesus then replies, “you are speaking to him”. Because our friend had already experienced Jesus’ power he instantly connects the dots and has no trouble accepting the fact that Jesus was able to do what he did for him because he was God in human form. And in response he does the only thing a human can do in the presence of God, to begin worship.

Now that is not where it ends. When Jesus sees that our friend believes who he is and is willing to respond, Jesus does something even more special for him. He gives him another revelation. Jesus tells our friend, “I entered this world to render judgment—to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see<sup>[e]</sup> that they are blind.”

This section is packed with three very significant concepts and I want to very quickly lay them out for you.

The first is what I call “obedience insight”. Let me explain. When a master tells his servant to do something he does not owe the servant any explanation as to why that thing needs to be carried out right? For example if the boss tells his office staff to deliver a box to so and so location, he does not have to tell the office staff what is in the box and why it is important to deliver it. The person delivers it because it is their job to do it. So it is with us. God does not owe us an explanation when He tells us that we are to obey the ten commandments or when he told Abraham to take his family and leave Ur of the Chaldeans and go to some location or when he told Moses that he had been chosen to go speak to the Pharaoh. No explanations were given to our Biblical heroes because God does not owe us any explanations when He issues us a command. God is God and we are his servants. And the master does not owe the servant an explanation. But here is the fascinating thing. When we do obey, God does do something He does not have to do. God gives us an “obedience insight”. An obedience insight is some principle or concept that comes from the being of God that was related to the “why” he asked us

to do what he did. Knowing that why becomes very empowering. It is also God telling us, you are my servant but I am treating you as a friend. This is exactly what is happening in verse 39. Because our friend responded to Jesus in belief and worship he gave him a deep insight into something of God like as if our man was Jesus' friend or something.

That brings us to our second concept. So what insight did Jesus give his friend. If you want to give this insight a title it would be "spiritual vision". Spiritual vision works like this. You see there is a spiritual reality that sits on top of the physical world we live in. And when Jesus Christ's light radiates out into this world you begin to see things you never saw before. In fact you begin to see two kinds of people. People who can see into that spiritual reality and people who cannot. And this capacity to see spiritual reality has nothing to do with whether they are physically sighted or blind. It is as if one half of the world can see something the other half of the world cannot see. Think of it like eagle vision. Now eagles have the most amazing capacity to see. Their eye lenses can change shape to focus on things very far away. Their optics are so amazing that they can see a rabbit's ears moving from two miles away. That's like standing at Metropolitan Ave just at the exit from I35 and looking at a rabbit in the parking lot of the neighborhood Walmart and seeing its ears move. If that is not impressive enough eagles can also see in Ultra Violet. There are a whole lot of things around us that look different in UV light. Eagles use it to detect traces of urine that its prey may have left. Having spiritual vision is like that. If you have spiritual vision you can see a whole lot of things that many people cannot see. Jesus said, his coming into the world exposes those people who have spiritual vision and those people who do not.

The third concept comes from the little dialog that Jesus has with the Pharisees in verse 40 and 41. The idea Jesus is explaining is the idea of "overreach". Let me explain. You see in this dialog when Jesus is explaining this idea of spiritual vision to our friend, there are some Pharisees who overhear Jesus talking and become very offended. Why are

they offended? Because they think that Jesus is calling them spiritually blind and they want to protest that characterization. This situation is funny because the way the Pharisees act is a perfect example of spiritual blindness. And in their spiritual blindness they are also demonstrating this principle of “overreach”. You see the Pharisees were normally sighted people who had an exalted status as spiritual teachers in that society. So they assume that because of their physical abilities and because of their status they could not have any deficiencies in their spiritual vision. After all they thought that they were better than everybody else so therefore of course they had the ability to see into the spiritual world as well. This idea that because we have this ability over here therefore we have this other unrelated ability over there is what I call “overreach”. You see overreach in almost every sin including the first one. When Adam and Eve looked at the apple and saw that it looked good they concluded that therefore it must be good. Overreach. The people in Babel thought that they could build tall structures so therefore they could reach anywhere including God. Overreach. How does this work in our world? In our world overreach associations are usually if someone is rich then they are probably wise or if someone looks good they must be smart, or if someone is famous they must be good or have more value than others, or their words are more trustworthy. Now there could be people who are both rich and wise or good looking and smart. What I am saying is that when you have one quality and assume the existence of another non-related quality, that is overreach. And overreach is a massive problem because overreach is the biggest reason people think they don’t need a savior. They think if they have intelligence or wealth and can take care of themselves they don’t need a savior for any other aspect of life. Because of the Pharisees overreaching, it was difficult even for Jesus to communicate spiritual truth to them. Because they were strong in many aspects of their life they thought that no body could teach them anything even about things related to God. And God hates it when people claim a strength in an area that they know nothing about. That is what Jesus is referring to in verse 41 when he tells the

Pharisees “If you were blind, you wouldn’t be guilty”. “But you remain guilty because you claim you can see.” These Pharisees were overreaching and claiming something false is not only a terrible sin, it gives people the illusion that they don’t need a savior.

Think about this. The greatest irony of being faithful servant of our Lord Jesus Christ is that when you follow Christ without questioning, you get the answer to the unasked “why” questions in the form of obedience insights. People who won’t obey without being given the “whys” on the other hand never receive the answers to their “whys”. Those who follow Christ receive many obedience insights.

And the obedience insight our friend was given was that Christ’s light exposes those who have “spiritual vision” and those who do not. Being able to see what is going on in the spiritual world is even more important than being able to see what is going on in the physical one. Seek the light of Christ and you too can have this kind of spiritual vision.

Finally having spiritual vision enables us to see where we might be overreaching. To be cured of overreach is to be cured of pride itself. And when we are cured of pride we will be able to have a true and realistic assessment of ourselves and our need for a savior.

My prayer is that this time of listening in to this exchange between Jesus and our friend and the Pharisees has given us some obedience insights and spiritual vision and overreach sensitivity. And when we do Christ’s light will start shining through us into the darkness. And that my friends is what you and I were created to do. Let us pray.