

## The Cast | People Engaged in the Story of Jesus Christ

### *Blind Men*

John 9

2.25.18

*As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup> "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." <sup>6</sup> When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, <sup>7</sup> and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam " (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing.*

*<sup>8</sup> Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" <sup>9</sup> Others were saying, "This is he," still others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one." <sup>10</sup> So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?" <sup>11</sup> He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight." <sup>12</sup> They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know." <sup>13</sup> They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. <sup>14</sup> Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see." <sup>16</sup> Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. <sup>17</sup> So they said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet." <sup>18</sup> The Jews then did not believe it of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, <sup>19</sup> and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?" <sup>20</sup> His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; <sup>21</sup> but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." <sup>22</sup> His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. <sup>23</sup> For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."*

*<sup>24</sup> So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." <sup>25</sup> He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." <sup>26</sup> So they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup> He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?" <sup>28</sup> They reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup> "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from." <sup>30</sup> The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. <sup>32</sup> "Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. <sup>33</sup> "If this*

*man were not from God, He could do nothing." <sup>34</sup> They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they put him out.*

*<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"*

*<sup>36</sup> He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you." <sup>38</sup> And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him.*

*<sup>39</sup> And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." <sup>40</sup> Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and*

*said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" <sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.*

We've been looking at the characters in the Four Gospels.

Today we meet some blind men... one who is physically blind and comes to see... others who are spiritually blind and who refuse to see. The first can't ignore his need. The others won't face their need... and they are left there...left in their blindness and their guilt...left unforgiven and un-seeing.

This chapter is amazingly crafted as a literary unit and it's all about seeing and knowing, hearing... words like light and eyes ... blind and open ... believe... know...judge (i.e. decide) (perception).

It's about HOW WE SEE THE WORLD...and how perceiving Jesus Christ accurately is the key to really seeing and knowing the meaning of life and freedom and what it means to be human.

Two points (a long one and a short one): 1) SEEING the world (how do WE see the world and how does Jesus Christ see the world?) 2) SEEING Jesus Christ (How do we come to see Jesus and what happens when we do?)

You may have heard that there are only two categories of people in the world - two kinds of people: those who put people into categories and those who don't.

But truth is we all tend to put the world ... people ... situations ... INTO categories ... how we try to make some sort of ORDER out of our lives... try to manage our worlds ... Life is messy - we try to tidy it up.

When we tune into this chapter the disciples of Jesus are doing that very thing. They see a blind man and he becomes a case-study for one of the categories they've always accepted: if you sin - bad stuff happens to you. If you sin big, then BIG bad stuff happens - like disabilities and disasters.

But THIS young man was BORN with a bad disability ... and he couldn't have sinned and caused the blindness ... so ... maybe it was his parent's sin OR maybe it was some sort of pre-payment for sins he would commit in the future... it's all a very interesting moral quandary (interesting for everyone but the

blind man of course!)

When the man is healed in this delayed healing method that Jesus Christ uses here (spit and soil), after the healing, the NEIGHBORS jump in and rather than celebrate with the man, THEY ALSO are only interested in trying to fit this into some category... "IS this the blind man or someone who looks like him? How DID this happen? ...Where is the Person who's responsible for this?"

Then, very similar to other miracle accounts... the scene is interrupted by the news that THIS was a Sabbath when Jesus Christ made the clay ... and now the clergymen get involved. They ALSO have a way of seeing the world... have categories... for how they manage their lives... and kneading dough on the Sabbath is OUT... and this was a lot like kneading dough (making mud) ... so this is OUT. And if you are a Sabbath breaker (in the way they define that) it can ONLY mean that you are NOT sent from God.

They are upset. They begin questioning this young man (btw - no one has congratulated the man ... or celebrated) so they interrogate this "man reportedly born blind" (suspicious!) ... "How did this happen??"

"All I know is...He put mud on my eyes ... told me to wash ... I was blind but NOW I see."

"Well, this must be a bad man ... a Sabbath breaker ... what do YOU say??!"

"Well... that's not really my area of expertise (it's yours) but if push comes to shove and I had to answer...I guess I'd say, He's a prophet (?)"

"Ah! What do YOU know? This is obviously a hoax ... can ANYONE even verify his blindness?"

" ... Uh, we DO have the man's parents, here ..."

"OK, send 'em in ...let's get to the bottom of this ... let's meet the parents: ... Is this your son? And ... WAS he born blind?"

But the parents know very well the way people see the world ... with all these categories for who's in and who's out. They have to color inside the lines because this is a situation that could land you in the "OUT" category ... if you're not careful.

The parents fear that if they don't answer the questions the right way they may be excluded ... so they sort of give up their son ("We know he's our son - we know he was blind ... we know he sees. How? and Whom?: you'll have to ask him ...") Twice John notes that they answered that way from fear of exclusion. The in and the outs - fear and suspicion, inclusion, exclusion, it's the way we SEE the world - our categories defined by our limited perceptions.

Now, how does Jesus Christ see the world?

Well, the passage begins: "As Jesus was passing by He SAW a man blind from birth" and the word for "saw" is that Greek word we've already met in John (CH 3, a few weeks ago with Nicodemus). It's a word that can mean to see or to know (in fact 10 times in this chapter it is translated "to know"). Jesus Christ doesn't only look at people ... He perceives them. He doesn't gawk at them as curiosities (like the neighbors) nor does He FILE them into neat or interesting ethical categories (like the disciples - who turn the man into a fascinating theological case-study ("who sinned ... ?"))

Nor is Jesus going to use the commands of God as categorical restraints to excuse Him or prevent Him from showing compassion or help. ("Sorry - it's Sabbath - can't help!") The Sabbath is made for man.

Nor is He at all afraid of being judged by people and being excluded - categorized. He sees, He perceives, He understands. We saw the pattern last week. He sees (really perceives) then approaches, then feels then helps.

He gives Himself to the man (it's kind of odd for our germ-o-phobic culture, but Jesus Christ is not really concerned about fitting into our standards of etiquette.) Man is taken from the dust (Gen 2.7) ...and Jesus uses it in to make the man whole again.

Jesus was SENT from God and Jesus SENDS the man to the pool called "SENT". That word is used over 20 times to describe Jesus Christ in John, "sent from the Father" and that's how He sees the world - a mission field to which He was SENT in order to find and heal and to save. Later, when the man is indeed excluded and put out of the in-group - Jesus goes and (v.35) "finds" the outcast - and like a Good Shepherd (next chapter) Jesus finds and engages this lost sheep.

So ... what you're saying, T.J., is that the way WE see the world is limited, categorized and exclusive but Jesus Christ is not like us ... HE's open and inclusive? Right?...

Ummmmm...Yes ...and... No.

He's different (by our standards) - He's loving and perceptive, self-giving/courageous in a way we're not but He's not sentimental and definitely not nice.

(He's not a tame lion!) Not inclusive in the way of modern hyper-tolerance... "live and let live". He's the "unavoidable Issue." He's the watershed/dividing line.

He has categories too. But unlike ours - His perception is NOT limited; He SEES the real issues - light /darkness, blindness/seeing... dead or alive.

At the very end of the scene, when He sees the man now healed, He, like a mid-wife, births the man into life and from unbelief to faith. Then Jesus says v.39, "For judgment I have come into this world."

You know this Book of John is organized like a legal case - a trial motif - and ostensibly Jesus Christ is on trial... or so it appears BUT at a deeper level, the world is on trial, "for judgment I came into the world."

My coming has now created only two categories - apart from Me, there is only darkness and guilt - in Me is light and life. If the world could save itself or reform or fix itself - then I would not have come to live and die in place of the guilt ... and broken.

But My coming exposes that the world stands condemned and estranged from My Father. My coming is the great verdict, the great exposé - the world cannot be fixed unless, I come to live as the New Man, the Second Adam - the one and only truly obedient Man ...

"And then I am to face the judgment...I must DIE under the sentence that belongs to the guilty." THIS IS HOW Jesus Christ SEES THE WORLD.

As Warren Gage shared with us, in this miracle that uses spit and earth Jesus is saying, "In order for you to be healed, I will be showered with human spit and blindfolded (Mk 14.65) ...and I will go INTO the earth from which man was made... I will sanctify the earth by My resting IN IT on the Sabbath."

THIS IS THE VERDICT- everyone is in Adam or in Me - represented by the fallen man or by the obedient Man. These are the only two categories. Everyone is on one side or another.

Wow! That's very exclusive! To say that a person is either represented by Jesus Christ and thus is acceptable to God or not represented by Jesus Christ and thus not accepted by God - that's very narrow.

But, see ... we're all narrow ... we all divide the world into good people/bad people; educated/ignorant; liberal/conservative; old/young; rich/poor; normal/unusual; born here/immigrated here; cool/uncool; Jew/Gentile; North/South - we're all narrow minded... But none of those matters to Jesus Christ: He's wildly inclusive.

For Jesus - one watershed issue, one verdict - "for judgment I came into the world"- Be in any of these categories without Him and you're lost. He's fantastically exclusive.

That's how Jesus sees the world. 1) Seeing the world and 2) Seeing Jesus: How do we come to see Jesus and what happens when we do?

Well, the clergymen were so convinced that they knew, they saw, they perceived the world the way it really is - AND THAT'S WHAT KEEPS THEM FROM REALLY SEEING: their self-confidence.

And Jesus Christ is saying to them, "If you'd only come out with your hands up and admit ... 'Alright! We don't get it!' Then, I could give you sight. But because you so insist on proving that you DO see – I can be of NO help to you! Your sin remains!"

He's saying - EITHER I will be your Attorney or I will be your Judge. YOUR SIN WILL BE FORGIVEN OR IT WILL BE JUDGED. It's not sin that will keep you out of My Kingdom – IT'S YOUR INSISTENCE THAT YOU DON'T NEED GRACE - insisting that you're right - that you KNOW, that you SEE! If you're too good to need grace - too sure of yourselves - THAT PUTS YOU IN THE WRONG CATEGORY!"

On the other hand - the man who was blind and healed ... through this scene, gradually he comes to believe. First, he calls the Healer, (v.12), "the one they call Jesus", then (v. 17) "prophet", then (v.33) "the man from God" and finally (v. 38) he calls Him, "Lord". See how his categories change.

And as he comes to see Jesus Christ for who He is and as he comes to believe, he is also liberated from fear. He's not enslaved to the in-crowd. His parents were self-protecting but he is self forgetting.

And at the same time he's getting dependent on Jesus, he's also becoming more courageous and assured. Eventually this man who's never read a book is outwitting the experts - they can't answer his flawless logic... and they just start throwing dirt (34) ("You were born in huge sin!")

There are two syllogisms in the passage: the first held by the disciples and the Pharisees built on a wrong premise said: If you have trouble it's because you sinned – the blind man had trouble therefore the blind man has sin.

The second syllogism is the one the healed man said to the Pharisees: God hears ONLY the prayers of the Righteous – God heard THIS MAN'S prayers and healed me – THEREFORE this Man is Righteous!

And they are trapped in their in their own non-logic.

in the end THIS man believes (remember: "believing is seeing"). He not only got physical sight - he got real insight into who Jesus Christ is. He got the light of the world; he learned the meaning of life. He believes in Jesus Christ and he has really begun to see.

I wonder if you're free to say, "Lord Jesus, I'm not sure I see - but I know You are the answer to my blind-spots or even to my total blindness ...

Lord, in a new/fresh way (or maybe for the FIRST TIME) I come to You and say, "I trust You ... I fall down and worship you - seeing You is what I need - Lord help me - open my eyes !"