

## NOW I SEE

John 3:9:1-41, cf. 8:12  
Lincoln Park Baptist Church, West Newton 65, Mass.  
Sunday, Jan. 5, 1964

### Introduction:

The chapter that we have read presents us with a typical Johannine miracle story. First we have the circumstances surrounding the miracle itself; then a discourse on the different reactions to the miraculous healing. In respect to the second stage of the story, two aspects are present: the negative reaction of the Pharisees to the deed of Jesus, incurring thereby judgement, and the positive response of the blind man, who not only was healed, but came to recognize Jesus as the Son of Man -- the Messiah -- and to worship him, obtaining thereby not only physical health but moving into the sphere of eschatological salvation as well, for in the gospel of John, to recognize Jesus as the Son of God is to possess eternal life right now.

Jesus is presented here to us as the judge and saviour. "For judgement I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind."

In the context of this chapter, at least three groups are judged unworthy to share in the salvation and freedom offered by God and only one is declared worthy.

- I. Those that limit God's freedom of action within narrow doctrinal considerations are blind:

The disciples saw the blind man from his birth, could only think of this question: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents?"

They were judging human misfortunes and situations from the narrow perspective of a dogma or doctrine. It was an accepted axiom in those days that when a man suffered from certain infirmities, people attributed the cause of the disease to his or his parents' sins -- dogmatic considerations already had prejudged the case.

We tend to do the same many times. However, in this specific case Jesus, although not denying that there might be some relationship between sin and sickness, affirms categorically and with a sense of joy, so it seems: "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him."

The neat doctrinal distinction of the disciples is thrown overboard in this specific instance in favor of the sovereign manifestation of the freedom of God. God is at work, and no one, not even infallible doctrines can deter his action. In the freedom of God, Jesus cures the blind man.

Also in his freedom, God reveals himself where we think that he should not.

- (1) Man who told me that a Roman Catholic cannot be saved. But we cannot put fences around God.
- (2) Segregation is justified on doctrinal grounds. Some people see the Negro race as condemned by God to a place of inferiority. But again we have to say that the only valid statement is: "God makes no exception of persons."

We cannot live from this specific theological doctrine about the origin of evil. Jesus has already judged it inadequate.

II. Jesus also judges those that limit God's freedom of action to the framework of tradition -- be it legal or genealogical, that is, to a certain family tree. The Pharisees in our narrative fall within this camp. They are the ones who affirm: "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the sabbath." And say to the blind man: "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." And then by saying: "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."

Take notice of these arguments:

- (1) Jesus is breaking a certain legal restriction -- so he is not from God. He does not keep the Sabbath = so he is an outcast. Everyone that does not enter through our narrow moralistic perspective is a sinner and, therefore, God cannot act through him.

But Jesus was the first to break those barriers -- he held great attraction for publicans and sinners. It is a sad commentary on the church when the sinners are not attracted to it; and do not find in it God's gift of forgiveness.

- (2) Notice also that they say that God has spoken through Moses -- but this man we do not know. This is the voice of those that God spoke in the past and can only speak in the present through those who have the proper credentials. It actually amounts to saying that God cannot act in the present except he agrees with the ecclesiastical authorities.

The only trouble about this position is that we have become managers of God.

- (3) The dire judgement of the Pharisees consisted in the fact that they could not see God's action
  - (a) outside the accepted channels of revelation
  - (b) that they endeavored to control God's action.
 In this reason when the Messiah appears -- they do not recognize him and they are blind, and because they claim to see, are also guilty. "If you were blind, you would have no guilt, but now that you say, 'We see', your guilt remains."

**III. Jesus judges also those that favor the status quo, out of fear.**

- 1. This is the position of the parents -- They were afraid to disagree with the Jews because of the tremendous threat hanging over their heads.**
- 2. This is also true of the church in many respects: "We are afraid to tip the boat or the speak out."**
  - (a) True in Germany**
  - (b) True in race relations**

**IV. Only the blind man who gained his eyesight can see God's action.**

- 1. He experiences and understands God's action**
  - (a) the healing**
  - (b) the spiritual understanding develops  
progression = boldness**

**He sees his life as a gift of God. He cannot see himself within the context of dogma, or morality and the status quo. He can only see himself as object of God's action. He responds with boldness and adoration.**
- 2. He is willing to proclaim the fact and stand by it.**

**Do we proclaim God's action as well as he did? Do we have the richness of Christian experience that overflows in deed and word? "We cannot help but speak the things that we have seen and heard."**

**"Woe unto me, if I do not preach the gospel."**
- 3. He is willing even to face excommunication.**

**This stand makes us brothers of Jesus -- sharers of his lot.**

**Just as he was rejected, so are we.**

**Conclusion:**

**Can we really say "One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see."?**