



Encounters with Jesus – The Man Born Blind

Date: Sunday 20th February

Speaker: Rachel Binder (City Centre), Becky Stamps (South Site)

Key Verses: John 9:1-41

Talk Summary:

In this story we read of Jesus healing a man born blind. This turns out to be controversial for two reasons. First, because Jesus healed the man on the Jewish Sabbath (the day when work was not to be done). Second, because by healing a blind man and by claiming to be the Light of the World, Jesus is saying that He is the promised Messiah, the Saviour the Jewish people were expecting (see Isaiah 42:6-7 for an example of a prophecy Jesus fulfilled).

Both light and properly functioning eyes are necessary for the human sense of sight to function. In this story, we see Jesus' character revealed as both the Light (John 9:5) and the Healer of both physical and spiritual sight. The disciples, the blind man and the Pharisees all have a direct encounter with Jesus in this story, with quite different results.

The narrative opens with Jesus' disciples asking a question about why the man was born blind. Jesus corrects their false assumptions and draws their attention to the more important thing: the work God wants to do in this man's life. In the face of the man's suffering, Jesus invited His disciples to look for and participate in God's work. Our God is present with us when we suffer, and He gives us as His disciples the privilege of bringing His presence into situations of suffering and need. Though we look forward to the day when we will live with God in a world free of sin and suffering, right here and right now, suffering is an opportunity for the people of God to express the Kingdom through acts of compassion.

The man born blind, assumed to be cursed from his birth, experienced a total transformation of life through Jesus giving him sight. It took the healed man a while to figure out all of what had happened to him, but despite the questioning and rejection he experienced from the religious teachers, by the end of the story we see the healed man responding to Jesus personally, putting his trust in Him and giving Him his worship. Many of us also have stories of healing, Jesus encounters and worship. Some of them were life-

changing and some of them seem more ordinary, but all are part of what it means to know and follow Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Finally, the Pharisees (the religious teachers) also encountered Jesus and the miracle He did. Jesus didn't follow their understanding of what a person should and shouldn't do on the Sabbath, so they concluded that Jesus must be wrong. Their spiritual pride blinded them. They were unable to recognize God Himself when He came in the person of Jesus, despite the amazing miracle they witnessed. In this story, there wasn't a happy ending for the Pharisees. But there is an invitation for us to a different ending: to be like the blind man who was healed; to live from a place of actual connection with God, not just knowledge about Him; to lay down our own "rightness" and welcome His transformational work in our lives.

Worship

Worship is not just singing, it is thanking God for who he is and what he has done and is lived out through a life of trusting obedience. Discussing this together is an act of worship.

(Small group worship resources can be found at bvc.so/sgworship)

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?

If you have a time of singing you can skip the above questions but please do ask this question each week:

- What has God been speaking to you about this week? *(Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it)*

Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

- The disciples were quick to assume the man born blind or his parents were at fault for his condition. What are some of the assumptions that our culture has about people who are suffering or in need? How do you think the biblical perspective is the same or different?
- When you encounter suffering and need, what does your response tend to be and why? Do you sense an invitation from God to respond differently?
- What difference did it make in your life when you first met Jesus?
- What difference does your continuing walk with Jesus make in your everyday life (generally, or a recent example)?
- The Pharisees knew a lot about God, but they didn't actually understand His character. They were busy "for Him" but were lacking connection with Him. They were "right" in their view of some things (and wrong in others), but consistently missed the big picture of God's compassion and power.
 - How do you find yourself identifying with the Pharisees in this story?
 - Is there one thing you would like to do this next week that could help increase your connection with God?

Witness - How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?

We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don't know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus. Pick one of the below each week:

- How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?
- What church events coming up would your friends appreciate an invitation to?
 - Upcoming Events (*go to bvc.so/whats-on for details*)
 - Kingdom Come Conference – 26th February
 - Encounter Night – 26th February