

The Wrong Questions

(Preached @ Footscray Baptist Church by Cheryl Williams, March 19th, 2023 - John 9:1-41)

Ever since I was a child, I have not been able to see anything, nothing at all. When I was little, I had to rely on my parents and siblings to keep me from danger, to help me wash and eat and learn. I had to take them by the hand and follow them when we went anywhere. I had to rely on my senses of taste, touch, sound and smell. I really had to trust others. I was okay at home, I got to know where everything was, I used the walls to guide me around, I knew how many steps from my room to the kitchen and to the bathroom.

As I got older I knew I was becoming a burden on my elderly parents, as I had no way of earning an income. So, I did what many people did in my situation, I took to the streets and started begging. I began to rely on the generosity and compassion of others. That's how I met Jesus.

One day I was sitting there begging and Jesus and his friends came past. Now people like me had got used to being the objects of other's curiosity. So I wasn't surprised when they asked Jesus why I was blind, had I or my parents sinned. In my time, people believed that if someone had a disability, it was the result of someone's sin. What was surprising was the way Jesus responded to them. Wrong question he told them, nobody sinned to cause this. Now some people seem to have thought I was blind just so Jesus could prove he was the Messiah, that is a complete misunderstanding of what he said. What he said was, no one caused my blindness, it was just the situation I was in, but wait, he said, I think I can help him. Before I knew it, he took some dirt and spit, yes spit, and rubbed the mixture on my eyes and then told me to go and wash them. I did, and guess what, I could see again. I rushed back to tell him and show him and to say thank you, but what a furore this had all caused.

Some bystanders really believed it was me, others thought I was someone else. I had to keep telling them it was me! They all wanted to know how it happened, so I told them exactly what I have just told you. They had more questions – where is the one who healed you, honestly, I didn't know.

Then they got the big guns out, the religious leaders came and asked me what happened, again I told the story, but they were angry. They kept saying this man couldn't have been from God, because he had broken the rules of the Sabbath, by doing it on the Sabbath. To tell you the truth, I had no idea what day it was. They kept pummeling me with questions, where is he, how could he do it, who did I think he was. I just kept answering honestly – I didn't know where he was now, how he had done it, but I did think he was pretty special, a prophet maybe.

Well that set the cat amongst the pigeons, clearly they didn't believe me, didn't believe that I was born blind – did they want to see the bruises and scars from all the scraps I had got into over the years. So they went to my parents, my dear parents, now they were scared, they didn't want to upset the status quo, they knew that would lead to them being kicked out of the religious community of which they were part. So they just

said I was who I said I was, and if they had any more questions they should go and ask me.

So back they came. Calling Jesus a sinner, now I had no comment on whether he was a sinner or not, all I knew was that now because of him I could see. I didn't want to argue with them, I had no view of Jesus, except he had treated me with compassion and healed me. In the end I really upset them when I said I didn't really understand any of this, but clearly this man must have been from God. Well they called me all kind of things and drove me out of the community, accused me of being a smart aleck and trying to teach them. Really I was just trying to help them see what had happened from my point of view.

Jesus got word of what had happened and sought me out again. He talked to me about our religion and the expected Messiah – I wanted to know who it might be – Jesus said its me! I couldn't help but believe him, given the changes he had made to my life, so I did all that I could, and knelt down and worshipped him. He had literally given me back my sight, now he was saying he had come into the world to teach people to see what was really important.

I heard some of those religious leaders started asking amongst themselves if they were the ones who were blind – perhaps they were. Perhaps they need to listen to him and see how he acted with compassion, that just might remove the scales from their eyes. If they stopped judging him, they might rejoice with me now that I could see colours and faces, trees and the lake, that I could now earn a legitimate living and help support my parents. But no, they were obsessed with their rules, rules that hampered people from really experiencing life.

So the day Jesus put mud in my eyes I began to see, not just the physical world but the spiritual world. I now knew that light rids the world of darkness both physically and spiritually. I pray people might have the courage to remove their biases and truly see the world and each other as people made in the image of God. I pray that people might have the courage to tell the truth without fearing ridicule and rejection. I hope that people might have the courage to open themselves to new possibilities, to new ways of seeing the world, to new insights.