

Judgment time – blind or not

HN/SS 24/07/05 am

Reading: Isaiah 6, John 12:20f

Study Text: John 9:39-41

Sing Psalms: 1, 95:1-5, 95:6-11, 82:5-8

YoungP eople: Walk on beach – what can wash away my sin Psalm 103:12.

Man's greatest need is to know what his greatest need is. Have you heard this proverb? Many people live in ignorance of their true spiritual condition. They have a false sense of security. In their sin they are blinded by sin itself. They know it all. 'Don't talk to me about God or religion. I have heard it all before' they say. They see no point in coming to church to hear the Word of God taught, for they know it all. The preacher is the only man it seems (apart from the politician that is) who finds himself teaching people who know more about his message as he does. Jesus found the same thing when he taught the Jews.

With grace and power Jesus opened the eyes of this man with congenital blindness. With even greater grace and power he opened his spiritual eyes, for he was also born spiritually blind. He was born in sin and lived in darkness. But on this wonderful day Jesus found him, and revealed himself to him. He believed in Jesus. He fell down and worshipped the Son of God.

While he was prostrate before Jesus there were those standing around and looking on. They probably heard the interaction between Jesus and the beggar. In any case they heard Jesus when he looked up and spoke to them. In this crowd were some Pharisees, watching his every step and trying to catch him out in anything he said.

Judgment

Jesus introduced himself and his mission with the words – *for judgment I have come into this world* (9:39). 'It is somewhat startling to find Jesus saying that he came into this world for judgment, especially since at an earlier time he said that God did not send him into the world to judge it (3:17). But the message of salvation necessarily includes judgment. What else can be said about those who reject this offer of salvation and go on their own careless way?

Jesus came into this world, sent by God the Father, to be the light of the world, to save sinners. But some love darkness, they want to continue in their sin. In their pride they say 'I am okay, I know how to get along in this world. I don't have to listen to Jesus'. Since there is no life outside of Jesus Christ such people automatically condemn themselves when they reject Jesus. *He who does not believe the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God remains on him* (3:36).

The blind see

That those who do not see may see. Jesus had changed the life of this man who was born blind. Not only were his physical eyes opened but his spiritual eyes were also opened by the power of

God. It was no longer just another man who he saw standing before him – it was the Son of God. He put his faith in Jesus and worshipped him.

While not all are born blind physically, as this man was, we are all born spiritually blind – and this is what Jesus means in verse 39. We are born in sin. Sin blinds us to the truth about life and death. It does even more than this. Sin deceives us into thinking we know everything and we become even more blind – if that is possible. We become blind to the person of Jesus and deaf to his words. *The way of the fool is right in his own eyes* (Proverbs 12:15).

‘Oh to see ourselves as others see us’ we often hear. Oh to see ourselves as the Lord sees us is what we should be saying. Sin blinds us to the truth about ourselves. We see everything in this world from our own selfish viewpoint. And the world encourages us to take this one eyed view of ourselves. ‘You deserve the best’ is the punch line of so much advertising. ‘You can do what you like’ the world says. ‘Enjoy all the treasures and the pleasures of the world’ it says. Take no thought for others, take no thought for tomorrow, take no thought for God. So many go on blindly until death strikes like a thief in the night; and then what do they face – the Judgment!

Consider the posture of this poor man before Jesus. He was down on his knees; he was prostrate, worshipping Jesus. He knew the great work that Jesus had done – *one thing I know, that though I was blind but now I see*. Peter similarly fell down before Jesus when he saw the power of Jesus displayed in the catch of fish. *Depart from me for I am a sinful man O Lord* said Peter (Luke 5:8).

The poor man made no pretence as to his knowledge of spiritual matters. *Blessed are the poor in spirit* said Jesus – and here was a man poor in spirit. He admitted to knowing little about Jesus – *whether he is a sinner or not I do not know* (9:25). He acknowledged he did not know who the Son of God was (9:36). He was blind – as is every person – but he **admitted** his blindness – unlike many. Such admission is an essential prerequisite to being saved. He was ready to listen, and to believe.

The seeing become blind.

That those who do see may be made/become blind. These words are not as easy to understand as the previous phrase. Jesus is not talking about people becoming physically blind. His is talking about spiritual blindness. But what does he mean by saying *those who see* will become blind? It becomes clear from what follows that he is speaking ironically. He means those who **think** they see. They are blind like everyone else but they think they see.

Some Pharisees standing nearby and watching heard these words Jesus spoke. He may well have been addressing them. They were not sure whether to be offended by his words or not. They did not comprehend what he was talking about, but being utterly self-centred wanted to know if he was talking about them. In any case it was an indictment upon their religious judgment to see Jesus accepting worship from this man whom they had cast out as a sinner. True judgment belongs to Jesus (5:22).

Pharisees were not the first to think they could see when in fact they were blind to the truth – and they were not the last. Isaiah spoke of such people – *make the heart of this people dull, and their*

ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and return and be healed (Isaiah 6;10). Jesus made reference to this Scripture in John 12:40, shortly before his arrest and trial.

The Pharisees were proud of their great knowledge of the Scriptures. But as Paul said *knowledge puffs up but love builds up* (I Corinthians 8:1). They had knowledge, they had been taught the Scriptures, but this knowledge was only in their heads – it had not entered their heart and life. Knowledge is a great blessing but it can also be a curse if it is wrongly used.

Corruption is rife in many societies. What happens if people in such societies are educated? Chances are they will just be smarter in their corruption. It was intriguing to see students in college devising clever ways to cheat in their exams. One year some wore large shawls into the exam room to conceal their notes – it was summer and over 40degrees – maybe not such a clever way to cheat! I asked them would it not be easier to just learn your work. Remember that the devil has great head-knowledge but he is none the better for it for it is not rightly used.

Many around us have knowledge of the Bible but of what use is it. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing we say. And even more dangerous if that knowledge is only in the head. People are alert to any mention of God or the Bible and immediately tune out, or they have well rehearsed answers to questions about sin and death. They think they see, they think they know all there is to know, but that knowledge has no effect on their life. It is often easier to preach to those who have never heard the gospel before than to those who are self satisfied about their spiritual condition.

Are we blind also the Pharisees asked Jesus. He replied *if you were blind you would have no sin*. ‘If you had not been privileged to have the light shining in your midst, if you had not had the oracles of God and the prophecies of Scriptures handed down to you, then you might well be truly blind and not be as guilty as you are’. Those who have never heard the gospel are still sinners of course, but the judgment upon those who have seen the light and rejected it will be terrible.

As it was they claimed *we see*. They thought they knew everything in the Scriptures – which they did, but they failed to understand the truth and failed to humble themselves before God. They proudly performed the rituals and outwardly kept the law, but their hearts were far from God. Their hearts were full of pride.

We see they boasted. They were standing tall. They were standing tall on their traditions, on their ancestry, on their superior knowledge, on their good works – like many today, even in the church. But none of these things could remove their sin. *Therefore your sin remains* Jesus told them. They refused to kneel before Jesus as the poor beggar did. He trusted in Jesus alone to remove his sin and give him life. Have you?

Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon