

Now I See and Witness

HN/SS 12/06/05 am

Reading: Matthew 10:16f, II Corinthians 4

Study Text: John 9:8-12

Sing Psalms: 46:1-5; 46:6-9; 40:1-5; 46:10-11

Jesus smeared mud in his eyes and told him to go and wash. He went and washed and came back seeing. He came back to his home and to his community with great rejoicing. Once I was blind but now I see! But that rejoicing was tempered by doubters and by sceptics – is this really the man who was blind and used to sit begging.

For sure there would have been a radical transformation in the appearance of this man when his eyes were opened. His whole face would have lit up, with his eyes now beaming – and his joyous heart would also have been reflected in his face.

But for other reasons some did not think it was the same person who sat begging. They doubted that such a work could be done. They were sceptical of the claim that this man had been healed – such a thing had never been heard of before. So they said *He is like him* – there has been some mix up- there is some other explanation.

But the man said *I am he*. I am the man who was blind but now I see.

Division

Jesus said *do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword* (Matthew 10:34). Jesus warned that he did not bring peace and unity to a community, but division. The sword separates. The sword divides. There will be those who accept and those who reject Jesus. There will be those who believe and those who do not believe.

Jesus did many mighty works of God and he spoke the words of God – amazing and wonderful words. In the light of these facts, in the light of such clear evidence that Jesus was sent from God we might have expected everyone to believe him. We might have expected all to turn and follow him.

But this was not the case. Remember the wonder of the cripple that Jesus healed. The man was a cripple for 38 years and Jesus told him to take up his mat and walk. All the people should have rejoiced with this man and praised Jesus for his grace and power. But the Jews saw him as a lawbreaker for he was carrying his mat on the Sabbath. They condemned Jesus as a Sabbath breaker.

The healing of this blind man brings the same responses – the people were divided. Some said this is the man who sat and begged. His parents identified him as their son who was born blind. But there were the sceptics and the unbelievers who sought to explain away this miracle. They

sought an explanation more reasonable to men – *he is like him* they said. Maybe this is his brother. We cannot comprehend and so cannot accept that the man who was blind can now see.

Despite all the evidence, despite the consistent testimony of Scripture and the reliability of the document themselves, still people choose not to believe. People today are just as sceptical as they were back then. They try to explain away the miracles – even men in the church refuse to believe Jesus performed miracles.

If science says miracles cannot happen then they did not happen according to such sceptics. Our knowledge today is so much greater than that of people back then they say. But there were those back then who would not believe, just as there are such people today.

The virgin birth of Jesus, miracles like this one we are studying, and even the resurrection of Jesus from the dead are denied by many today – just as they were at the time. The gospel is emptied of its power by such people; and a gospel emptied of its power will produce no fruit. It will soon wither and die.

The Pharisees were very pious, very religious. They proclaimed the law but they denied the One who fulfilled the law. They denied the grace and power of Jesus the Son of God and they soon found themselves fighting against God. Indeed in their zeal for the law they killed the Son of God.

Those who refused to believe that this man was born blind would soon be confronted by an even greater work of God. Jesus would approach the tomb and cry *Lazarus come out*. Lazarus was raised from the dead. This miracle again caused division. Many Jews believed in Jesus, but the Pharisees were only concerned about politics and their position in society – they feared what their Roman oppressors might do (John 11:48). It was expedient for them to remove Jesus from the scene.

Jesus said he who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me...he who does take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me (Matthew 10:37). How much scepticism, how much unbelief is because people fear others more than God, because they love others more than Jesus.

I am He

Into the confusion among his neighbours and acquaintances this man spoke two simple words – *ego eimi* – I am he. ‘I am the one who used to sit and beg because I was blind. I am not like him I am that man’. I was blind but now I see. Questions about his identity came to an abrupt stop. So began the wonderful testimony of this man. I am he!

What would have happened if this man had remained silent? What would have happened if he had not spoken up when he did? Some would have continued in their scepticism. They would have gone away with that question still on their mind- was that the same man who was born blind? They would have gone away content in their ignorance – no one knows the truth. This mans simple testimony dispelled that ignorance.

Having spoken once he was emboldened to speak again when they asked him *how were your eyes opened?* Jesus said to his disciples that when they were brought before men and kings to give testimony *do not worry about how or what you will speak – for it will be given you in that hour what you should speak* (Matthew 10:19). This man testified to the truth, to the facts, and we must do the same in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

This blind man knew very little about Jesus but what he knew he told to those who asked. *How were your eyes opened?* A man called Jesus made clay and smeared it in my eyes. Somehow this man heard the name Jesus and he boldly declared that name to his neighbours. It was a bold witness because the Jews had banned anyone from speaking the name Jesus (7:13). His parents were afraid to utter that name.

There are places in the world today where to utter the name of Jesus is to invite prosecution. Some states of India have anti conversion laws. People are not allowed to change their religion and anyone encouraging someone to do so will be prosecuted. Even Victoria has religious vilification laws. If someone finds the name of Jesus offensive beware! But this man loved that name Jesus and he declared it openly to his neighbours. Will you do the same?

His witness was based upon facts. His testimony was not ‘well I think this, or I believe that this is true’. He stated the facts without adding to them taking away from them. Let your testimony be the same. God has spoken. Let the word of God speak. He has called us to be like the prophets of old – boldly declare ‘this is the word of God’ and tell the gospel to all your neighbours.

The disciples did the same as this man after they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They did not speak philosophy – they spoke facts. Peter declared about Jesus whom the Jews had crucified *This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witness* (Acts 2:32). They saw the empty tomb and they declared this truth. *Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man stands here before you whole* (Acts 4:10).

Where is he now? The next question addressed to this man revealed a desire of his neighbours to meet Jesus. They wanted to know more about Jesus. Whether their motives were honourable or sinister we are not told. Some of them at least would have been genuine in seeking to know the truth. They wanted to know by what power this man’s eyes were opened.

The man did not know where Jesus was at this time. But he had led these people to want to know more about Jesus. His testimony pointed people to Jesus and not to himself. ‘Where is Jesus?’ they asked. They wanted to follow Jesus not join some organization.

So your testimony must always point people to Jesus. Tragically many a Christian testimony exalts self rather than Jesus. It points people to self or to some organization, rather than to Jesus and Jesus alone. We do not want some saying ‘I am of Paul’ and others ‘I am of Apollos’. Let our message always be Jesus is Lord – Jesus Christ and him crucified, Jesus raised from the dead and coming again in judgment.

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