

St. Luke's Episcopal Church  
The Fourth Sunday in Lent  
March 26, 2017  
John 9:1-41  
The Reverend John P. Carr

## Seeing is Believing

Let's consider two things. The first is that miracles *have never* happened in the history of the universe and secondly that *they have* and are connected to something meaningful.

Jesus uses a miracle of giving sight to a blind man to affirm His identity, give the blind man sight, and use the healing as an object lesson for His disciples and the Pharisees.

The story began with Jesus once again on the move in Jerusalem going about doing the work for which He had been sent.

He encountered a man, who without question had been blind from birth.

This man was the perfect instrument for the healing miracle of Jesus.

The disciples echoed the commonly held belief that the man was blind because he or his parents were guilty of some great sin.

Jesus quickly corrects them and informs them that the man is blind to be of use to Jesus *"he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him."*

Jesus created a little poultice of mud and spit and touched the man's eyes with it. He did not ask the man, He acted. Jesus was not only healing but he was touching and directing the man to act. The healing required not just the work of Jesus but the obedience of the blind man. He wanted to believe, he wanted to see. He went to the pool as instructed and washed as he was told and could then see.

If he had refused to go or to wash, he would not have been healed.

Jesus came to bring light into the world and He did just that when the blind man received his sight. The blind man did not see Jesus but he had the healing of the Jesus that brought light into his life.

Of course, the neighbors were amazed and the Pharisees were outraged. Some Pharisees had been following Jesus, not because they loved Him and His words but because they wanted to use His words against Him to kill Him.

The neighbors and perhaps some of the undercover Pharisees took the formerly blind man directly to the Pharisees because not only had a blind man been given sight but because this healing miracle had been done of the Sabbath.

The Pharisees are trying to get the newly sighted man to say something to indict Jesus, the man who the blind man had never seen, and who was not then with him.

Jesus was being tried in absentia using the testimony of a man who had never seen Him!

It didn't go well for the Pharisees. The newly sighted man told them what had happened. The Pharisees had his parents identify him and confirm that he had been blind from birth.

This created a big problem for them.

This was a real healing miracle that had been done on the Sabbath.

The man didn't know if the healing on the Sabbath was a sin or not but he was certain that the man named Jesus had healed him.

All he knew was that he was blind but now he could see!

He was a bit exasperated with the theological fine points the Pharisees were employing to trip him up in his testimony but he sticks to the core of his story.

- Jesus had opened his eyes,
- he can see.
- That is a miracle.
- This had never been done before.
- If this man were not from God he could do nothing.
- Therefore, this man, Jesus, must come from God.

Unable to make a decision or to make the man crack under pressure and having just received a very logical argument, the Pharisees pitched him out of the Temple. If they could not reject Jesus directly they could reject the one whom He had healed.

Waiting in the shadows outside, Jesus calls the man aside.

He asks the man if he *“believes in the Son of Man?”*

But *“who is he”* the man asks, *“so that he might believe in him.”*

Jesus answers, *“the one who is speaking to you is He.”*

Overwhelmed, looking into the eyes of Jesus, the man said,

*“Lord, I believe,”* and began to worship Him.

Although the man had been blind, Jesus used his blindness to show the light of His life in the world. The man who had been blind had become a believer. He was not a man of power, education or of the Temple, but he could now see what those in the temple who had sight refused to see. He was standing before the Way, the Truth and the Life, who is the light of the world and he recognized Him and worshipped Him.

Now, back to miracles. Either there are miracles and they have effect or there are not miracles. This is another one of those decisions we have to make in our faith journey if we are to be able to see like the man Jesus healed.

Think about what it would take for us to believe if we did not know about Jesus. If there were no miracles then Jesus is merely a teacher, philosopher, or prophet and he has been tagged with all three but that would also make him a liar.

The problem is that without the miracles, there is no healing, there is no fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, there is no resurrection, there is no Holy Spirit on Pentecost, there is no vision for Peter to go to the Gentiles and stop persecuting those of the Way.

God gave Jesus to us. Through His words and miracles, Jesus revealed that He is the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Savior, the Messiah. God was reaching out to us through the life of Jesus.

He sent His Son that we might believe, like the man who was blind who could now see the light and the life of Jesus.

Many will say that miracles do not exist. Others will say that miracles happened way back in the days of Jesus but not since then.

That does not make rational, scientific or logical sense.

Miracles have persisted over the centuries and have been recorded. Those who do not believe in miracles have the more difficult job to prove that all the miracles of the past 2,000 years did not happen.

We are living as animate star dust. Through a miracle of the combination of water, minerals and our own little power generation system giving us electricity, we are people.

I find that perhaps the most amazing miracle of all. This life is pretty amazing. Amazing because we people can think reason, create and alter our world to the point of putting a man on the moon and space shots to distant planets, it is all amazing.

What if we think for a second, that perhaps we don't know it all. Almost 95% of what we know about the world has been discovered since 1900. What we know now as the routine work of a smart phone and cellular system was beyond comprehension 100 years ago.

Perhaps *if* we think that we don't and can't know it all and make an assumption that in fact we don't know it all about the universe, God and creation, *then* we might be more in tune with why we have miracles.

What if we are really living with one foot in one world and one foot in another? What if our spiritual lives are very real and in touch with what I will call another dimension, the spirit world.

In his book, "Miracles", Eric Metaxas asked the question, "What if the God who created us and loved us found a way to break through into our world to offer us a hand, to say, *'If you take my hand I can take you back to where you once lived and to where you really belong, because your heart knows that you do.'*"

Would you take his hand and let him take you there?

Would you believe the miracle of his breaking through into this world?<sup>1</sup>

*If* we can believe that this happened once, that Jesus is the miracle of miracles, *then* we can believe that God sent His Son with his life and miracles, that we might take his hand, that we might like the blind man, believe.

*If* we can believe these miracles, *then* we might begin to understand that the miracles were and are a proof that not only can we experience them here, but they point the way to our final home.

It's ok to wonder. Doubt is the beginning of understanding. *If* you decide to engage in reading the stories of the life and miracles of Jesus so that you might be better able to experience the miracle before you, *then* you, like the blind man, will be able to *see* that He is the one who is speaking to you, and *believe*.

Amen

1. "Miracles", Eric Metaxas p.8