

Video: Little Things One Time Blind! Lots of people think that seeing is believing. That if God just showed them something amazing, something big, something miraculous, then they would really believe in him.

But if we don't see Jesus in the 'small' things, then it is unlikely that we will see him, even if something extra-ordinary happens.

I was listening to a podcast this week. It was based on Jesus' parable about Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man died and went to hell, but he wanted Abraham to send Lazarus back from the grave to warn his family, so they wouldn't end up in the same place.

But Abraham said, **"They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them."** Luke 16:29 He meant that they had God's Word to read and be warned about the direction of their lives.

But the man protested that **"If someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent."** Luke 16:30 He thought a supernatural visit from the grave would shock them into repentance.

But listen to what Abraham replied. **"If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."** Luke 16:31 If people have the wrong attitude, then even a spectacular miracle won't necessarily change their minds.

And this is what happened in the fall out from the spectacular miracle we read about last week. A man who had been blind from birth was completely healed by Jesus. But even although the Pharisees saw the evidence of this, they still refused to believe.

John 9:13-41: **"They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. ¹⁴ Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵ Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."**

¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath."

But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided.

¹⁷ Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened."

The man replied, "He is a prophet."

¹⁸ The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. ¹⁹ "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"

²⁰ "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. ²¹ But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

²⁴ A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

²⁵ He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

²⁶ Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

²⁷ He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?"

²⁸ Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

³⁰ The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. ³² Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

³⁴ To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

³⁶ "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."

³⁷ Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."

³⁸ Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him.

³⁹ Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."

⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?"

⁴¹ Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."

1. Confusion

The Pharisees were confused about this miracle because it didn't fit in with their religious traditions. That was because, "The day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath." John 9:14

We've seen this problem arise before in John's gospel. The Sabbath was the last day of the week, and according to the fourth of the 10 commandments, the people of Israel were not to work on that day, but instead keep it as a holy day for the Lord.

However, the Jewish scribes had taken this command, and from it listed 39 tasks that were prohibited on the Sabbath. But in healing this man, Jesus had broken three of these rules:

- Firstly he'd healed, which was against their rules apart from in an emergency.
- Secondly, in making mud, he had kneaded, which was prohibited.
- As was anointing, which Jesus did when he put the mud on the man's eyes.

So in performing this miracle, Jesus had gone against the tradition of their religion, which confused and divided the Pharisees:

- Some said: "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." John 9:16. If he broke their rules, which they believed were from God, then he could not be from God.
- But others were puzzled: "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" John 9:16

Their problem was that they trusted so much in their religious traditions, that they could not see the clear evidence that pointed to the reality of the identity of Jesus.

2. Clarification

So how could they sort out this confusion? Well, what they did, on the surface, seemed really good. They sought clarification about this miracle.

a) A Clear Testimony

So firstly, they asked the man, what had happened. Then they asked him what he thought about Jesus. "What have you to say about him?" John 9:17

And this man gave very clear answers to both of those questions.

- He told them what had happened: "He put mud on my eyes... and I washed, and now I see." John 9:15
- And he also told them who he thought Jesus to be: "He is a prophet." John 9:17. In his eyes, only a prophet could do this miracle.

It was a clear and powerful witness to what Jesus had done and who he is. But the Pharisees weren't convinced. Not because of the lack of evidence. But because their preconceived ideas about the Sabbath and about Jesus blinded them to the truth.

So instead of accepting this man's testimony, they searched for some way to discredit it. "The Jews did not believe that he had been blind from birth." John 9:18.

b) A Cowardly Testimony

So that is why they brought in this man's parents and asked them, "Is this your son?... Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" John 9:19

In response, his parents gave answered two out of their three questions. "We know he is our son... and we know that he was born blind." John 9:20

But interestingly, they refused to answer the third one about how he'd been healed. They said, "He is of age; he will speak for himself." John 9:21.

This wasn't because they didn't know what had happened. Instead, it was "because they were afraid of the Jews." John 9:22. They didn't want to do what their son had done in speaking up about the identity and power of Jesus because they were afraid of what it would cost them.

They were too afraid to count the cost of following Jesus. They chose the familiarity and comfort of the synagogue community instead of Christ.

It is understandable from a human point of view, but following the crowd in this way brings with it serious consequences. Jesus said, “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.” Mark 8:38

But did you notice the reason behind this couple’s fear. It was because “The Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.” John 9:22

This investigation, on the surface, was a good idea. It was right that these religious leaders ask these questions and seek those answers. But the problem was, this was not an open and honest examination of the evidence. This was not a genuine desire to seek the truth. Most of them had already made up their minds about Jesus.

3. Confrontation

And this is why despite the evidence, this request for clarification deteriorated into a heated confrontation. They called the man in again and said to him, “Give glory to God’... We know this man is a sinner.” John 9:29

“Give glory to God” was what Joshua said when he confronted Achan about his sin of hiding the plunder from the city of Jericho. It was a solemn charge for this man to finally tell the truth, because they were convinced that he’d been lying to them, not on the basis of the evidence, but on what they already believed knew about Jesus.

Jesus did not follow their religious traditions. He did not confirm their righteous standing. He did not fit into their ideas about God. And so he must be a sinner, no matter what the evidence said.

a) Refusing to Listen

And so when this man responded with another clear testimony about what Jesus had done in his life, they still weren’t convinced. They asked this man to tell them his story again. But he could see what was happening. He said, “I have told you already and you did not listen.” John 9:27

Their problem wasn’t that they hadn’t been given enough information. But, like a rebellious kid who keeps on asking their parent why they can’t do what they want, their problem was that they didn’t want to accept the answer.

And so when he sarcastically asked if they wanted to become disciples of Jesus, they launched into an attack. “You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses! ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where he comes from.” John 9:28-29

They claimed that they were rejecting Jesus because they were passionately following the Word of God that came through Moses. But if that had been the case, then they would have recognized Jesus, because Moses pointed to Jesus. He said, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.” Deuteronomy 18:15

And Paul wrote that the purpose of the law, that God had given to Moses was to point people to Jesus. “The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.” Galatians 3:24

But, as Jesus has already said in this gospel, they refused to be led to him. “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” John 5:39–40

b) Removing A Follower

And they made this crystal clear by rejecting this new follower of Jesus. “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” John 9:34 There is that bad theology again that we were thinking about last week. In their eyes he was born blind because he was a terrible sinner, and now he had confirmed this by siding with Jesus and daring to confront them.

And so they threw him out, not just of their presence, but out of the synagogue community. He was excommunicated, because they were sure that they were right, that anyone who did not follow their rules could not be from God.

c) Rejecting the Truth

But this wasn’t an innocent mistake on their part. This was not an honest error of judgement. This is was result of their sin and pride. Later Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.” John 9:39

As we've seen, Jesus came to save sinners. He came to rescue those who were lost in darkness and despair, like this man who had been blind. And so for those who are willing to accept their helplessness, he has all the power needed to open their eyes and bring them into the kingdom of light.

But the other side of Jesus' coming is that he brings judgement on those who claim to be able to see. Like these Pharisees, in their pride and self-sufficiency, those people refuse to come to Jesus. They resist his truth and the challenge it brings. They hide from his light because it shows up their sin. And so they will become blind to the reality of who Jesus is and what he can give.

And this is why they stand guilty of their rejection of Jesus. Later, when some Pharisees asked him if they were blind, Jesus replied: **"If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."** John 9:41

These people were not blinded by their ignorance or by the lack of evidence, but by their pride and their refusal to accept that they needed Jesus, the light of the world to shine in them.

4. Commitment

But the man who had been born blind was different. He showed amazing commitment to Jesus.

a) Growing Conviction

Initially, when people asked him who had healed him, he told them about, **"The man they call Jesus."** John 9:11. At this stage, this is all he knew about him. He wasn't healed because of his great knowledge of, or faith in, Jesus.

But, as we've seen, after speaking to the Pharisees, he came to the conclusion that **"He is a prophet."** John 9:17

Then, under cross-examination, he came to the conviction that only a man of God would have been able to do what Jesus did! **"If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."** John 9:33.

b) Willingness to Learn

And even when he was insulted and put out of the synagogue by the Pharisees, this did not deter his journey to faith. Jesus found him and asked him: **"Do you believe in the Son of Man?"** John 9:35. The Son of Man is one of the titles of Jesus that go back to the Book of Daniel, about the king who will reign forever.

And this man responded amazingly. **"Who is he, sir?... Tell me so that I may believe in him."** John 9:36 In contrast with the Pharisees who were arrogant, self-assured and closed-minded, this man's response to Jesus is honest and humble and teachable.

c) Declaration of Faith

And so Jesus revealed his identity to him. **"You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."** John 9:37

And when this man heard this, he responded with an amazing declaration of faith, **"Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him.** John 9:38 The blind man finally saw clearly and fully. Jesus is not just a prophet, not just a man from God. He is the Son of Man, God's chosen king. The one who deserves to be Lord of our lives. The one who deserves our worship!

For his parents, the cost of commitment was too great. But for him, despite all that it would cost him, he readily accepted Jesus as his Lord! He was like Paul who said, **"I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ."** Philippians 3:8

Conclusion

So this morning, our question is, which one are we most like?

- Are we like the Pharisees, refusing to come to Jesus because he won't fit in with our pre-conceived ideas, our religious traditions, our pride in our achievements and status, because he won't do what we want?
- Or are we like the parents, holding back because although we've seen what Jesus can do in someone's life, we're afraid of what it might cost us?
- Or are we like this man, willing to bow before Jesus and accept him as our Saviour and Lord, because our eyes have been opened to the wonderful reality of who he really is?