

It is more profitable to know Jesus than to know about Him.

Weekly Edition – April 27, 2018
Gospel According to St. John – Third Year

Jesus Searches for the Man (Part 1)

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 worshiped 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.

The Gospel of St. John

Part I

- Prologue 1:1-14
- First Year 1:15 – 2:22
- Second Year 2:23 – 6:71
- Third Year 7:1 – 12:50

Part II

- The Last Discourse 13:1 – 17:26
- The Arrest and Trial 18:1 – 19:16
- Death and Resurrection 19:16 (b) – 21:25

Entering Into Scripture: A Meditation on Being Found By Jesus

Overwhelming. Overwhelming and wonderful. How can I describe it? It's like I am literally born all over again. Everything is new. New and wonderful and strange. I simply have no words. Today I see for the first time. Everything has changed in an instant. It is intoxicating; too much to take in.

Surprises everywhere. New sensations. Odd sensations. Like when I first saw my mom and dad today in the Temple. I did see them, but I cannot tell you what they look like. I recognized their voices. Voices mean something to me. I remember voices. But faces...well, that is all new. Every face is a stranger to me. They are so different – there are so many. It is all so new. I cannot tell one from another.

And facial expressions. There seem to be so many. They don't look anything like I imagined them. People don't look anything like their

voices. It is just so much. I am taking it all in, but it is just too astonishing. Everything is new.

Like scale. That surprises me. I had no concept of how big "big" could be. If I could not hold something or touch it, I simply had no capacity to relate to it. The Temple is huge! I had some sense of size from running my finger along the walls of the city for more steps than I could count. But this! These walls reach up into that blue sky forever.

And blue. It is not what I imagined. Color confuses me. I know fire is red because people connect "red" with fire. But until today I didn't know what red looks like. And I know the sky is blue because people say so. But looking into the sky and seeing the beauty of it... it is simply overwhelming. They say water is blue too. I can't wait to see that. But the fountains here in Jerusalem – this water doesn't look like the sky...!

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can see through it. It is clear. I even saw my own face for the first time – reflecting back at me – when I washed this morning. I stared at myself and cried, my tears creating ripples on the water.

And flowers. They are everywhere. I know them by smell. I know a rose by smell and the touch of the pedals. But it does not look anything like what I imagined in mind's eye.

The day has been such a whirlwind. The Prophet called Jesus put mud on my eyes this morning and told me to go wash in the pool of Siloam. I did as he instructed. Nothing has been the same since.

All my life I have only known darkness. Darkness and shame. I was born blind. My physical darkness only a symptom of the humiliation I experience every day. Although there are things even a blind man can do, I am not allowed to do any of them. I am defined by my blindness. I am inferior and incompetent; an outcast; a toss-away human being. They say I am sinner – its why I am blind. No one wants a sinner working for them. So I am consigned to the lot of beggar – depending on the kindness of others to live. But today my shame and humiliation were removed – now I see.

I was taken to the Temple and presented to the Priests. That didn't go well. They expelled me. I have been looking for my parents since then, but so far – nothing.

I am sorry to be babbling on. So much has happened so fast I can scarcely put it into words. Maybe it's like learning a different language. Since being thrown out of the Temple this morning I have been pointing to things and asking people to name them. I am getting the strangest looks – like I am deranged. But the images are to me like so many new words and all of them sound the same and have no meaning because I have not yet learned the language. It is all so overwhelming to me. And it is bright. I never knew the world was so wonderfully bright as it is – the light and the colors and the sheer bigness of everything.... It is too much.

"Here you are!" I hear the Voice from behind me. I know that Voice. It is the Voice of the Man who gave me my eyes. I turn at once, and there before me are faces. I scan them to see if I might be able to pick out the One who spoke. It is futile. All are new. All are looking back at me. All look the same. My heart races. Time stands still.

"Do you believe in the Son of Man?" I hear that Voice. It is His Voice. My eyes meet His. There is nothing in His appearance that might distinguish him from those who are with Him. They all look the same to me. But I know that Voice.

"Who is He, sir?" I ask. "Tell me so that I may believe in Him."

"You have now seen Him; in fact, He is the One speaking with you."

I look into His eyes. I don't know what I expected. Maybe that the Promised One of Israel would stand out – that there would be something extra-special in His appearance. But before me is a Man; in appearance just like all the others. Something stirs within me. Tears begin to stream down my face. I am arrested with a deep stillness that seems to freeze my limbs and grab my throat.

The events of today come flooding back: This morning a Man put mud on my eyes and told me to wash. In the Temple, as the Pharisees bitterly argued before me, I realized that only a Man of God could do such a good thing. By the time the Temple guards seized me and dragged me from the Temple and threw me down the steps, I knew the Man had to be the Promised One of Israel. And now He stands before me? Really? What have I done to merit such favor from God?

My whole body shudders. My voice goes weak. My lips move but no words form. I fall to the ground and grab hold of His feet and begin to praise Him with loud groans and wailing. How long this goes on I do not know. I do not care. I worship the Man before me. I have never known this kind of praise. It just streams from deep within me. I have lost control of my emotions and they just pour out like a flood.

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My tears drench my face and saturate His sandals. Sandals. Yep. What I expected. They look just like they feel... feel and smell. Leather mixed with the smells of the ground. Earthy. Pungent. I think how I am like these sandals – earthy. Pungent. Filthy feet are repulsive. Just like me. For all my life I have been an outcast. A less-than. A half-person. A life with no worth. A beggar. Yet God has stooped to the lowest low to touch my eyes with mud and give me sight. I do not deserve such favor. More tears, now mixed with deeper sighs and convulsions as my inner-most being seems to vacate in sobs of joy and cries of repentance.

This moment is interrupted by a hand on my shoulder. Now hands on both sides. My thoughts come back into my body. I become aware that I lay prostrate before this crowd of strangers. The hands guide me up and I rise to my feet. Who are these men who hold me on my left and my right? It does not matter.

Jesus. I hear His Name in my mind. Jesus. This is the Promised One of Israel. I feel a deep stillness rush over me. Calm. Warm. Sacred. Time stops. I look into His eyes again. "Lord, I believe." This time the words come out. My voice is calm. Steady. Clear. I believe. I cannot explain this. I cannot explain how it is that now I see. I know I see. I know I believe.

Jesus looks into my eyes. Eyes are something different. Not what I thought. I take in the shape of His eyes, the patterns of color around the inner dot. Eyes seem to be so expressive. Like they want to speak to me – as if they are saying something to me but I don't know their language, so I can't grasp the message. But I see beauty in

His eyes. And I feel love radiating from Him. And I feel safe in His presence. And I seem to be lost in the moment, unaware of myself.

Then He speaks. "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." And a wave of emotion surges up in me once more. I begin to worship Him anew with tears of joy and gratefulness. And it is all so much. And I do not want this moment to end.

"What? Are we blind too?" I did not see the man. I recognize the voice. I heard it in the Temple today. It is a Pharisee. I do not turn to look. My gaze is fixed on the Son of Man who stands before me.

Jesus does not look away from me either. Jesus responds to the Pharisee while still looking at me. "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."

The moment lingers as if stretching on and on. I have so many questions, but my mind seems stuck as in a deep slumber from which it cannot be awakened.

The Pharisees turn in a huff and go away. Some of those who gathered around us now drift away. I ask if I can go with Him, but Jesus tells me to go find my mother and father.

My friend points the way to their house. As I begin to go I look back over my shoulder one last time. He has vanished into the crowd. I feel a foot taller. A smile washes across my face and won't go away. I feel light as a feather... hmmm; I wonder what a feather looks like?

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Reflection 1: Jesus Heard

The man has been cast out of the Temple by the Pharisees. His only crime was to defend You before them – giving his personal testimony and speaking the truth about the character of God. As You spoke through Isaiah, *“See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall and the one who believes in Him will never be put to shame.”* None of this man's fate is hidden from You. You hear that he was

excommunicated by those who are to be the keepers of Your law. How did You hear? The text does not say. Did someone tell You? Or is it like the Psalmist proclaims: *“The Lord hears the needy and does not despise His captive people.”* No matter where I go, or what I do, or what is concealed within my inner-most thoughts – none is hidden from You. You hear. You know. You care.

Application: *In what ways am I confident that Jesus hears me? When have I felt like God was not listening?*

Reflection 2: Jesus Found Him

You are a God of relentless pursuit! You not only hear about him, You go and seek him out. You search for him and find him. You are seeking him, yet he does not know he is being sought. Elsewhere You said, *“the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”* Here, You seek. Here, You find. Here, You save. In my life You also

seek me out, find me, and save me. You were seeking me before I knew to seek You. You were pursuing me when I didn't know I was being sought; when I didn't know I was worth being found. You loved me when I did not love myself. You saved me when I didn't know I was dead.

Application: *In what ways has Jesus proven to me that He is a God of relentless pursuit?*

Reflection 3: God Listens to the Godly Person

What a day it has been. His eyes are given to him for the first time, yet what should be a moment of great joy and celebration is overshadowed by a series of trials that culminate in his being thrown out of the Temple and excommunicated from his people. We are not told anything of the man's mood at this point. But at the highpoint of his defense of You, Lord Jesus, the man makes this confession of faith: *“We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly*

person who does His will.” These words were spoken in defense of You, but they might also rightly describe the attitude of this man late in the afternoon on the day of his healing miracle. So we should not be surprised that You hear of his plight, or that You seek him out. He has come into a living faith, and his now opened eyes are all the proof he needs that You are a Holy One of God.

Application: *What is the evidence in my life that I, too, am a godly person who does God's will?*