

Sunday 18th July 2021
Glynde Lutheran Church
Sermon on John 9:1-39
Theme: “Since I met him, I can see!”
“Come and meet Jesus, and see, really see”

Introduction:

One of the Christian musicians that I used to like listening to in the early days of my ministry, *in the late 1980's and the 1990's*, was a guy by the name of Don Francisco. He was a guitarist who sang moving songs about Jesus and the Christian life in a folky sort of way.

I used to listen to him a lot as I drove long distances in the Wimmera near Horsham, and then again also in Geelong as I drove down to Colac and back for a house church there.

One of the songs that he sings is a song called “Since I met him, I can see”. It’s a song that is sung from the point of view of the man born blind, *the man that John tells us about in our Bible reading*, the man who was healed by Jesus.

I thought that we’d listen to Don Francisco sing this song on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nwui3e5VR7I>

The words are as follow:

Now it’s hard to describe what my life used to be
To someone who’s always been able to see.
You know I wasn’t unhappy or bitter that way
**But everything’s changed since I met him
that day.**

I was down by the corner just passin’ the time
Sitting in sunlight and feelin’ it shine
When the sounds of a crowd began to grow in my ear
So I waited and listened as I heard them draw near.

Then a man stepped up to me and spat on the ground
Put the mud on my eyes and then smeared it around
Sent me off to Siloam to wash off the clay
And I opened my eyes and I looked at the day

**And I have no idea how He did it
I just know what happened to me
Yesterday, I was in darkness
But since I met Him I can see.**

When the Pharisees heard it they put me on trial
Even called in my parents and grilled them a while
But when at the end, I defended the man
Who had opened my eyes, all the trouble began

I said, "Even since the beginning of time
No one's opened the eyes of someone born blind

This man's sent from God, it just can't be denied"
And they cursed me and grabbed me, and threw me
outside.

I really don't know how he found me
I just know who was talking to me
It was easy to tell by the sound of His voice
He was the reason I see

And as soon as He spoke to me, I couldn't hide
The emotion that welled up from deep down inside
And combined with the dreams that He'd made to
come true

To kneel there and worship was all I could do.

**And I called Him my Lord and Messiah
For everything He'd done for me
Yesterday I was in darkness
But since I met Him I can see**

**And I call Him my Lord and my Saviour
For everything He's done for me
Yesterday I was in darkness
But since I met Him, since I met him
Since I met Him I can see.**

Part 1: The man born blind's testimony

"Since I met him, I can see". This is the testimony of the man born blind, who has been healed of his blindness by Jesus. In fact, three times the man born blind says this in John's account of what happened. To his neighbours and others who had seen him begging, and who are wondering what on earth has happened to him, he says:

***"The man called Jesus made some mud, rubbed it on my eyes and told me to go to Siloam and wash my face. So I went, and as soon as I washed, I could see" (9:11).**

And to the Pharisees, the religious leaders of his time who are investigating what happened, he says:

- * "He put some mud on my eyes; I washed my face, **and now I can see**" (9:15).
- * "I don't know if he is a sinner or not. One thing I do know: **I was blind, and now I see**" (9:25).
He would have been one "happy, chappy"!

But not only can the man born blind now see physically, he can also see spiritually so far as Jesus is concerned. Initially, in his conversation with the Pharisees, *the religious leaders*, he talks about Jesus as simply being "a man", some wonderful person who has made it possible for him to be able to see (9:11).

Later on, though, when the Pharisees question him more closely as to who he understands Jesus to be, he answers: "He is a prophet, *someone sent by God to speak God's message and do God's work*" (9:17). And he adds to this a bit further on, when he says:

“Since the beginning of the world, nobody has ever heard of anyone giving sight to a blind person. Unless this man came from God, he would not be able to do a thing” (9:32,33).

And then, finally, listen to what he says when he meets up with Jesus again.

John tells us:

When Jesus heard what had happened, that the Pharisees had expelled the man from the synagogue, he found the man and asked him, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” The man answered, “Tell me who he is, sir, so that I can believe in him!”. Jesus said to him, “You have already seen him, and he is the one who is talking with you now”.

“I believe, Lord!”, the man said, and knelt down before Jesus (9:35-38).

He has come to believe in Jesus, to *trust Jesus*, and he bows down before Jesus in a form of worship. He doesn't yet know that Jesus is God's Son, but he bows down at Jesus' feet, and one suspects that a full confession as to who Jesus is, is only a short time away (*cf. the confession in Don Francisco's song: “My Lord and Messiah”, and “My Lord and my Saviour”*).

So what's the testimony of the man born blind?

If he was here today, and could summarise what meeting Jesus meant to him, I think he'd say to us something like this:

**“Look, my whole life was changed by meeting Jesus:
‘Yesterday I was in darkness,
But since I met I can see!’”**

Part 2: Our testimony

“But since I met him, I can see” is not only the testimony of this man who was born blind that John tells us about, who was healed by Jesus.... It is also the testimony and the confession of countless people who have met Jesus since that day, and who have also *like this man* had their whole life changed by Jesus.

It is my testimony, and the testimony of many or most of us here today. It is also the testimony of a guy named John Dickson, whose books read a lot, one of whom I'm reading at the moment: “*Bullies and Saints*”.

Can I tell you of how he came to faith.... He gives his testimony as follows:

My introduction to faith came not through family tradition, Sunday School, church attendance, or any other formal means of religious instruction, but through the irresistible power of friendship and good food. One of the relics of Australia's Christian heritage is the once-a-week Scripture lesson offered in many state high schools around the country. Usually, the person running the lesson was an elderly volunteer from the local church.

I took my chances on these harmless old ladies, because ‘non-Scripture’ involved doing homework under the supervision of a *real* teacher. One of these Scripture teachers had the courage one day to invite the entire class to her home for discussions about ‘God’. The invitation would have gone unnoticed, except she added; ‘If anyone gets hungry, I’ll be making hamburgers, milkshakes and scones’.

One Friday afternoon several weeks later, I was sitting on a comfy lounge in this woman's home with half-a-dozen classmates feasting on hamburgers and bracing myself for the god-bit.

I had never been to church or even had a religious conversation at length, so this was an entirely new

experience. I remember thinking at the time that there was nowhere to run. I had eaten so much of her food *that* I could not have got up out of the couch if I had tried.

As I looked around the room at my friends -- all sceptics like me -- I was amazed that this woman would open her home (and *her* kitchen) to *us*. Some of the lads there were among the worst 'sinners' in our school: one was a drug-user (and seller), one was a class clown and bully, and one was a petty thief with a string of break-and-enters to his credit.

We returned next Friday (with more of our friends) and the next and the next. In fact, we turned up on this woman's doorstep most Friday afternoons for months. I could not figure her out. She was wealthy and intelligent. She had an exciting social life, married to a leading Australian businessman. What was she thinking inviting us for a meal and discussion?

At no point was this teacher pushy or preachy. Her style was completely relaxed and incredible generous. When her VCR went missing one day, she made almost nothing of it, even though she suspected (probably correctly) it was one of our group. For me, her open, flexible, and generous attitude toward us 'sinners' was the doorway into a life of faith.

As we ate and drank and talked, it was clear *that* this was no mere missionary ploy on her part. She truly cared for us, and treated us like friends or, perhaps more accurately, like sons. As a result, over the course of the next year, she introduced several of us from the class to the ultimate 'friend of sinners', Jesus. Three of those students are today in full-time Christian ministry (*John Dickson, Promoting the Gospel, 41-42*).

Meeting Jesus changes people's lives as it changed John Dickson's life. I'm sure he could sing these days along with the man born blind in Don Francisco's song:

**"Yesterday I was in darkness,
But since I met him, I can see!"**

Yes, meeting Jesus changes people's lives!

But how? How does Jesus change our life?

Well, in three main ways I think. But before I explain, let me tell you a story that John Dickson used to tell when he talked as a young man with people in schools, unis, and prisons.

He used to say to people:

Imagine being instantly transported through time and space to find yourself standing in the foyer of a huge cinema. As you're standing there, trying to work out what's going on, an angel riding a skateboard comes up and says, "G'day. Welcome to the Theatre of Judgement. We're about to show a movie".

"All right! What is it, Terminator 3 or something?", you ask excitedly.

"Ah, not exactly", he replies.

"What then"?", you ask nervously.

"Well, you're the star and it's a movie about your life – everything you did, said, and thought – with the boring bits taken out".

He shows you into a massive theatre where you sit down by yourself. The curtains are drawn, the lights dim, and for the next few hours you watch the movie of your life. After the film, the angel comes back in and says, "How was that?" You reply, "Well, I thought *that* there were a few dodgy bits"

The angel then says, "We're going to have a second running of the film. Everyone who appears in the film is out in the foyer. This time they're all going to come in and watch it with you".

"Uh, oh". Imagine that. Everyone in your life coming to watch a film of everything you ever did, everything you ever said, and everything you ever thought. What rating would the film get? Rated G? Rated M? Rated...

What if God saw everything we ever did, said, and thought? What if he held the 'dodgy bits' in the film against us?

I once asked a group of Year 10 students this question, and a

bloke sitting near my wife up the back mumbled quietly, “I’d be stuffed”. Personally, I agree with him.

And John Dickson adds:

“The great news that Jesus came to bring to the world was that, despite our failure to recognise God’s authority as Creator of this world, he stills holds out an offer of forgiveness. Put another way, despite the dodgy bits in the films of our lives, God is willing to accept us and even direct a new film for us (*John Dickson, A Sneaking Suspicion, p. 35-37*).

Well, let me use this illustration of John Dickson to talk about how Jesus changes lives, how Jesus brings light into our life:

1. Well, since I met Jesus, I don’t have to worry about my past. I know, *through Jesus*, that despite all “the dodgy bits” in the film of my life, God is willing to accept me, as *John Dickson puts it at the end of his illustration*.

One of my favourite stories that Jesus told, *no, my favourite story*, reminds us of this. It’s the story of the Prodigal Son, *the Lost Son*. This son demands his share of the property, leaves his father and goes into to a far country, *as far away from the father as he can go*, “where he waste(s) his money in reckless living”....

But does the father forget him? No way! In Jesus’ story, the father waits patiently in love for the son to come home. He doesn’t ever give up on his son, and when he sees his son in the distance *as the son is headed home, not knowing how he will be received*, the father rushed out to him and throws his arms around him, kisses him, and welcomes him back into his house as his son (*Luke 15:11-24*).

Behind the father in this story, Jesus wants us to see a picture of God. That’s how God is!

No matter what we’ve done in our life, no matter how badly we’ve messed up, God is willing to accept us,

because He loves us and wants us to live in his house, so to speak.

And not only does Jesus tell us that God is willing to accept us “despite all the dodgy bits in the films of our lives”, but also Jesus, God's Son, *made it possible* for us to be accepted by God, through his suffering and death on a cross for us. Without God's Son, Jesus, dying on the cross for us, we would be “stuffed”, *as that young bloke in John Dickson's classroom put it*. But Jesus on the cross took on himself the blame and the punishment that we deserve for our “dodgy bits”, *which the Bible calls our “sins”*. He took the rap for us, so that we can be forgiven and accepted by God.

So, since I met Jesus, I don't have to worry about my past sins, *or for that matter my present sins or my future sins*, because I know that Jesus has taken on himself the punishment that I deserve for them. Since I met Jesus, I can see in the sense that now I know what God is like, and that I *am* accepted by God as His forgiven child as I trust in Jesus as my Saviour.

2. Furthermore, since I've met Jesus I can see in the sense that now I know what life is all about. Through listening to Jesus and watching the way that he loved and cared for others (*hold up my Bible*), I know what the meaning and purpose of life is: it's all about living for others. That's how God *made us* to live our life, and that's how God *wants us* to live our life, once we've met Jesus, His Son!

What does John Dickson say at the end of his illustration? He writes:

Despite the dodgy bits in the films of our lives, God is willing to accept us and even direct a new film for us (p. 37).

That's what God's been doing in my life, ever since I met Jesus. And that's what God's been doing in the life of

many, or even most, of here today. And that's what God wants to do in the lives of all of us: "direct a new film for us", as we follow Jesus in living our life for others: loving and caring for them, *no matter what it takes, and no matter what the cost.*

3. As well, since I've met Jesus I can see in that now I know how the film of my life will end. Through Jesus, I know that my life will have a happy ending, *indeed the happiest ending possible: being with Jesus in God's wonderful new Kingdom, which God has in store for us.*

Listen to what Jesus says a bit further on in John's Gospel, *after the account of the healing of the man born blind:*
"Don't be worried and upset", Jesus told his disciples. "Believe in God and believe also in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house, and I am going to prepare a place for you. I would not tell you this if it were not so. And after I go and prepare a place for us, I will come back and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am" *(John 14:1-3).*

I've always loved "happy ever after" endings to movies that I watch. In fact, I often won't watch a movie if I know that it has a sad ending. Ask my wife Jenine. She'll tell you. There are many movies that she's wanted to see, but I've refused to see them, because I've know that they have a sad ending....

But isn't it great, *isn't it wonderful,* to know through Jesus that as we hold onto Jesus as our Saviour, we will have a happy ending to our life, *indeed the happiest ending possible: life with Jesus and with God, our Father, and with all God's forgiven children in God's wonderful new world to come.*

Conclusion:

“Since I met him, I can see!” This is not only the testimony of the man born blind, but it is also the testimony of all of us who have met Jesus, God’s Son, and had our whole life changed by him.

And it’s what God wants for all of us, and for all of our family and friends, and for everyone: that we meet Jesus and have our whole life changed by him.

God wants us all to be able to sing with the blind man in Don Francisco’s song:

**And I call Him my Lord and my Saviour
For everything He’s done for me
Yesterday I was in darkness
But since I met Him, since I met him
Since I met Him I can see.**