



Wey Valley Methodist Circuit – Pastoral Letter 9.6.2021 Rev Barrie Tabraham

“Sight and Insight” (John 9 : 30 – 38)



³⁰ The man answered, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing!” ³⁴ They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out. ³⁵ Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶ He answered, ‘And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.’ ³⁷ Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” ³⁸ He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshipped him.

This is the 2nd of my contributions during Rev Keith Beckingham’s absence on sabbatical, and looks briefly at another aspect of the story of the healing of the blind man in Chapter 9 of John’s Gospel. Last time I wrote about hearing and listening; on this occasion the passage from John 9 asks us to think about **sight and insight**.

If I still had pastoral charge of a church (My age and health rules this out, of course, which is why, possibly, we are called ‘supernumeraries’!), I think I would be asking my members a series of questions to help prepare for my church to re-emerge from the pandemic – at the risk of being stoned by some of my members!

They would be: over the past year:

- Now that I have been able to return to my church, and look around again at the building, what can I see that I would want to preserve and enhance, that helps me feel the presence of God?
- What aspects of the church’s premises, its fittings and furniture and so on, now seem unnecessary and possibly even a hindrance to the development of worship and mission here?
- What new methods of worship, ministry and mission – e.g. zoomed and streamed services, shared study sessions, meetings that should be encouraged because they enable to work of God to develop? Although zoomed services can never be the same as the people of God gathered together for worship – one feature that strikes me is that **we can all see each other’s faces**. Personally, I do not relish going back to sitting in parallel rows!
- What things have the pandemic and the past year enabled me to see new and better ways of enabling people ‘on the fringe’ (what Wesley might have called ‘almost Christians’) to become more committed to the way of Jesus?

The blind man had his sight restored by Jesus – but so much more. John’s account suggests that – though all his friends could see Jesus with their eyes – this man was given **insight**, in the sense that he saw his life and his relationship with God in a new way.

The blind man in John 9 had gone through a genuine, profound conversion. He not only acquired to ability to see with his optic nerve; he was give **perception** – to recognise who Jesus was and what kind of new life he could be given. This is a gift for which, surely we should all pray.

Fred Pratt Green, who was producing inspiring hymns well into his 90s, once wrote a verse that every Methodist Society should take to heart:

The Church of Christ, in every age,
beset by change but Spirit led,
must claim and test its heritage
and keep on rising from the dead. (*Singing the Faith 415*)

And many years before, a devout, earnest but rather blinkered Anglican clergyman not only had his heart 'strangely warmed', but his eyes widely opened – to see the need around him and the multifarious ways with which God could use him and the early Methodists to make the love of God real to others.

For us to pray: Loving God, we ask for the help of your Spirit in these troubled but challenging times. May she give us insight into your divine purposes, and the vision and strength to take the Church forward into a bright, new future – in Christ's name, and for his sake. **Amen.**
