

The Man Born Blind

First hymn (T Lobe den Herren) by *Joachim Neander 1650-80*

- 1) Praise to the Lord the Almighty, the King of creation,
O my soul praise Him for He is thy health and salvation;
All ye who hear, brothers and sisters draw near, praise Him in glad adoration.
- 2) Praise to the Lord who o'er all things wondrously reigneth,
shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth:
hast thou not seen, how thy hearts longings have been granted in what He ordaineth?
- 3) Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee:
ponder anew what the Almighty can do who with His love doth befriend thee.
- 4) Praise to the Lord, who when darkness of sin is abounding,
who when the godless do triumph all virtue confounding,
sheddeth His light, chaseth the horrors of night, saints with His mercy surrounding.
- 5) Praise to the Lord, O let all that is in me adore Him,
all that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him!
let the Amen sound from his people again; gladly for aye we adore Him.
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Prayer:

Dear Father, we are glad to be together in worshipping you, knowing that our worship, and our requests will be heard and received because we bring them in the name of your Son. Lead us by your Spirit in this time together, and build us up in your truth and our holy faith. For we pray in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus, the Christ. Amen

2nd hymn (T Cross of Jesus, John Stainer 1840-1901) by *Frederick Faber 1814-63*

- 1) Souls of men, why do you scatter like a crowd of frightened sheep?
foolish hearts why do ye wander from a love so true and deep?
- 2) There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea,
and forgiveness in his justice sealed for us on Calvary.
- 3) There is plentiful redemption in the blood which has been shed:
there is joy for all the members in the sorrows of the Head.
- 4) For the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind;
and the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.
- 5) But we make His love too narrow by false limits of our own,
and we magnify His strictness with Zeal He will not own.
- 6) If our love were but more simple we should take Him at His word,
and our lives would be illumined by the goodness of our Lord.
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Readings:

- Exodus 4:10-17
- John 9:1-9

Intercessions:

Dear Father, we are conscious of so many things in the world which seem out of order, or needing your divine hand to restore. Yet we believe that You are the true Lord of all, and that you are bringing everything to their rightful conclusion - that you see what we do not see, and that your sovereign will shall indeed be done! We pray for Ukraine and their problem of an invading neighbour, who appears to want to take over and suppress the residents of that country. We are grateful that the world sees that as wrong, and supports the people, both in opinion and supplies. We ask for a cessation of hostilities which you could achieve if that is right. We pray today for those your servants who live in places where there is a high cost to worshipping the true God, as revealed in Jesus, where cruel tyrants or misguided leaders punish such worship, even to forfeiting the lives of those Christians. Father will you strengthen and sustain them by your Spirit and by whatever means you know, and give them an unconquerable assurance of your undergirding power. And let their witness be strong to the pulling down of spiritual strongholds, and the bringing of those who see it into Christ's Kingdom! And so let your will be done in this world and bring about your purposes to the Glory of your name.

For we pray these our prayers in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus the Christ, Amen.

Address: "The man born blind."

This is one of the best-known stories told by St. John the Apostle. (John ch. 9)

The man born blind was a simple-minded man. He held no theories about life!

But the Jews around Jesus did! His disciples asked "Who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind? Jesus was very practical. He knew immediately what he would do so He said "We must work the works of Him who sent me as long as it is day!" That implies that the right time to do things is *now* - while we have the light (and the time!) Jesus said "I am the light of the world" twice - once here v.5, and once in 8:12! He took his timetable and orders from his heavenly Father - what He said was the time was when Jesus acted. He likewise did not present theories about "why?", only what he should do now!

He made clay from the ground, anointed the man's eyes, and told him to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam. He washed, and came back seeing!

Some neighbours and others doubted whether this was the man born blind!

He assured them he was, and when they asked him what happened, he told them, directly and simply! Then it became complicated, because his friends brought him to the Pharisees. And, (of course), it happened to be the Sabbath!

The man healed did not know who Jesus was, nor where he was now! He was a simple and un-complicated man. But the Pharisees immediately concluded that the healer "was not

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from God" for a ridiculous reason in the circumstances - Jesus had not followed their petty-fogging rules about keeping the sabbath!

Apparently it was of no great significance to them that an extraordinary miracle had just been performed! They seemed almost unconscious of it compared with the keeping of their sabbath rules according to their requirements! Jesus had broken none of the Mosaic commandments! No wonder Jesus had been so frustrated with them, and had criticised them so profoundly!) The Pharisees should have known this man - he had been a blind beggar from birth and almost certainly would have sat in the same spot for many years. Should they not have been amazed rather than angry as seems to have been the case!

Some of the "common people" concluded quite differently from the Pharisees. They asked "How can a sinner do such signs?" They could see the immensity of the miracle! The Pharisees asked the man what Jesus had done, and the man told them simply. Still they could not see and accept what he had told them!

They asked the healed man what he had to say about Jesus. The man had no reason for any theory about Jesus. He was almost guarded - "He is a prophet"!

(He was at least that!) But the Pharisees did not even believe that this *was* the man that had been born blind! So they called his parents to verify the fact! They were straight in doing so, but not in repeating what had happened, even 'tho they must have been delighted with the miracle! They were too scared about the penalty the Pharisees had stated would be the case should anyone

confess Jesus to be the Christ (which had been becoming increasingly obvious from the wondrous works Jesus had been performing!) The parents put it back on their son to answer, out of fear of the Pharisees. The Pharisees then confronted the man a second time, and tried to "bludgeon" him into agreeing with them "Give God the glory; we know this man is a sinner! He replied "Whether he is a sinner or not, I do not know. One thing I do know - whereas I was blind, now I see!" This was not enough for them, and they started pressing him with questions, asking him how Jesus had performed the healing. He was probably annoyed at their persistence in trying to label and ostracise Jesus - which was an action he was rather unlikely to agree with. He asked them why they were asking it all again - did they also want to be his disciples too! He was surprised at them trying to insist on Jesus' unacceptable behaviour!

The healed man then engaged in his simple explanation of the extraordinary healing that had occurred. His simple but clear logic came out - how amazing was the fact that here was a man (Jesus) whom no-one seemed to know where he was from, and yet he performed this astonishing miracle, not ever performed to his knowledge since the world began (and still has not been!).

He stated simply that we know God doesn't listen to sinners - only to those who are his worshippers; God listens to them! He then dropped the bomb of his simple truth - "If this man were not from God he could do nothing!"

Almost blinded with rage (from his impeccable logic I think!) they exploded "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" Then they threw him out of the synagogue, healed and all!

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Really it was a magnificent triumph of simple logic over biased hatred! They probably were unable to bear his simple truth. He had nothing to prove! He was the winner of the "debate" - no-one could deny his glorious healing! My guess is that the parents of the blind man were torn - between their healed son who was outside the synagogue but healed, and their continuance of worship in the synagogue where so many would have known about the miracle but been sad about the man's exclusion. They may also have been torn 2 ways!

The main losers would have been the Pharisees who must have known that an extraordinary event had occurred, and so many of the common Jews would have rejoiced for the man born blind, and been sympathetic and opposed to his ejection from the common worship of Israel for something so good! Many of them would have known that the Pharisees were wrong, but been unable to show it, because of their dominating presence !

Jesus, whom the man born blind had never seen, and didn't know where he was, later met up with the man, and asked him "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He would have known the voice and said, probably eagerly, "And who is he, Sir, that I may believe in him?"

Jesus answered "You have seen him, and it is he who is talking with you." And he said "Lord, I believe". and worshipped him (i.e. he prostrated himself in worship before him. Jews knew they could worship only one God!) Jesus finally said "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who (say they) see, may become blind!" I think this story makes it clear who could see, and who could not see! The truth will out.

Last hymn(T Penlan David Jenkins 1849-1915) *Anna Waring 1823-1910*

- 1) In heavenly love abiding, no change my heart shall fear;
and safe is such confiding, for nothing changes here:
the storm may roar without me, my heart may low be laid;
but God is round about me, and can I be dismayed?
- 2) Wherever He may guide me no want can turn me back,
my Shepherd is beside me and nothing can I lack:
His wisdom ever waketh, His sight is never dim,
He knows the way He taketh and I will walk with Him.
- 3) Green pastures are before me which yet I have not seen;
bright skies will soon be o'er me where the dark clouds have been:
my hope I cannot measure, my path to life is free;
my Saviour has my treasure, and He will walk with me

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Benediction:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

This service was prepared by Neil McIntosh (M.B.B.S. F.R.A.C.S.) for HopeNet SA