

# Sermon on Avail Yourself to Encounter Jesus

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## Text:

**John 9:24-38** <sup>24</sup> A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." <sup>25</sup> 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!" <sup>26</sup> Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup> 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?" <sup>28</sup> Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses!" <sup>29</sup> We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from." <sup>30</sup> The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. <sup>32</sup> Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." <sup>34</sup> To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out. <sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" <sup>36</sup> "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." <sup>37</sup> Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." <sup>38</sup> Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

## 1 Introduction

In 1985 I joined a small computer company as an engineer. When I started working there the engineers told me that the CEO was harsh and difficult. They told me he fired the previous President, the VP of Engineering, and a few others. People respected his technical abilities but were afraid of him. Shortly after I started working, the President invited me to lunch as was his custom to take new employees to lunch. During the lunch he told me about himself and the company and asked me to tell him about myself and my future aspirations. After more than an hour of conversation, I came to the conclusion that this man was not what people had told me about. That lunch was the beginning of a great relationship that continues today. After that lunch and other interactions with him I began to dispel the rumors that people were spreading

about him at each opportunity I got. I will tell them, “You got to know the man. He is principled but fair and that is why some people can’t work with him.” In essence, I began to advocate the cause of the President.

Our passage tells us of the blind beggar who was healed by Jesus and his encounter with the Pharisees. The Pharisees had formed a conspiracy against Jesus and his ministry and went around everywhere he ministered to discredit him. And so they confronted this poor blind beggar to convince him that Jesus’ act of healing him of blindness was sinful and wanted to get him on their side. But the blind beggar refused because he had had an encounter with Jesus. Through the encounter he acquired an experiential knowledge of Jesus. And just as I came to know my CEO well and started advocating his cause so also this blind beggar began to advocate the cause of Jesus. As a result of the encounter he gained a strong testimony and so he was not swayed by their rumors and maligning of Jesus’ ministry. Instead he launched what I call a strong defense (an apologetic) of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **2 The Pharisees were naysayers who wanted the blind man to join them**

Before we get to our passage, Jesus had run into the man born blind “so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” Jesus healed him by creating new eyes for him from mud created out of spit in a similar way God created man from dust.

### **2.1 The blind man rejected the Pharisees on grounds Jesus is a prophet**

The Pharisees had become naysayers in Jesus ministry. A naysayer is someone with an aggressively negative attitude. Anything Jesus did was automatically bad. They looked at Jesus’ actions with spectacles of negativity and tried to dissuade the people from following him. It is in this general modus operandi that the Pharisees confronted the blind man. The blind man first brushed their accusations of Jesus aside and told them he believed from his encounter with Jesus that Jesus is a prophet without any further explanation. But the Pharisees did not give up.

It is not uncommon to have naysayers in your life and ministry. These are people who are bent on discrediting you no matter what good you try to do. Such people can never see any good in you because they are wearing spectacles of negativity.

## **2.2 The Pharisees told the blind man to recognize their spiritual superiority and take Jesus as a sinner**

The Pharisees summoned the blind beggar into the synagogue and confronted him again saying in verse 24 of our passage, “Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner.” They wanted him to recant his claim that Jesus is a Prophet and say instead that Jesus is a sinner. They were appealing to the man to recognize them, the Pharisees, as the sole and legitimate interpreters of the scriptures and furthermore that he, as a mere blind beggar, had insufficient knowledge to make the assertion that Jesus is a prophet.

## **2.3 Resist Pharisaic people to avoid coming under their control**

The Pharisees behavior here reminds me of people who come across as possessing some extraordinary and mystical spirituality in the church. Then they use that stance to control people. In our previous church there was this woman who presented herself as old and mystically spiritual. She used to make all kinds of spiritual proclamations, tell of great visions, and speak of her special insight into the practices of pastors of that church. Once he told us that pastors of that church never ate in public and that only special deaconesses could cook for the pastor. One day, we attended a wedding in New York at which the apostle presided and I, then a deacon, was the MC at the reception. I was, therefore, seated at the apostles’ table at the reception. When we were served the food, the apostle ate his food, cooked by non-deaconesses, at the reception, in public, thus debunking the myth perpetuated by this mystically spiritual woman. Years later we found out that this woman was ten years younger than she projected, and her private behavior brought an end to her marriage and disrupted the husband’s desire to enter pastoral ministry. You must be weary of anyone who comes to you as mystically spiritual and tries to direct your thoughts and actions. You must be resolute in resisting such people to prevent them from leading you down the wrong path to destruction. Such people are operating a Pharisaic spirit.

### **3 The blind man refused to join them because of his personal encounter with Christ**

#### **3.1 The blind man used his testimony to overcome the Pharisees' temptation**

The blind beggar refused the Pharisees' request that he recant his statement and replace it by saying Jesus is a sinner. He refused to join them because of his personal encounter with Christ when he said in verse 25, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see." The blind man was telling them that his experience with Jesus is different from what they were saying. His experience defied their theology. What he knew was different from what he was hearing.

- He has encountered the Christ and no one can change that.
- He has encountered the incarnate God and no one can mess with him now.
- He has encountered the mighty God and no one can abuse him now.
- He has encountered the savior, and so he is no longer lost.
- He has encountered the sovereign God, and so he is no longer captive.
- He has encountered the Jehovah Jireh, the God who provides, and so there will no more begging.
- He has encountered the Jehovah Nissi, the God who leads him, and so there will no more stumbling.

Now he can sing a brand new song that the Pharisees cannot understand:

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see.

God must be experienced and not just heard. You cannot just have a head-knowledge of God. You must have an experiential knowledge of Christ. The man had been blind all his life, probably decades, and this encounter with Christ had become life-changing. His life had been transformed irreversibly and beyond measure. The Pharisees could not identify with that because they had not experienced the transforming power of God. The blind beggar's testimony

overshadowed the Pharisees temptation. He will not be dissuaded from following his Christ because of his testimony.

To overcome the temptations of the devil you need to have a solid testimony arising out of a special encounter with the Christ. Revelation 12:11 tells us that, “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.” Your testimony arising out of your encounter with Christ is what will enable you to surmount the trials and temptations you will face in this life. Apart from a real testimony of your encounter with Christ you cannot persevere as a believer. So, I call upon you today to avail yourself for an encounter with Christ. Open your heart, your mind, and your soul to receive the Christ. Allow yourself to experience the Christ.

### **3.2 The blind man launched an apologetic of the gospel based on his experience of Christ**

In spite of this powerful testimony by the blind beggar the Pharisees did not give up and they queried him with the intention of winning him over yet. Recognizing their hidden agenda he went on the offensive and launched a strong defense (apologetic) of the gospel when he said in verse 30-33, “You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”

The poor blind beggar with no theological training had expounded a theological truth to challenge the Pharisees. His theology was sound because he availed himself to encounter the Christ and it is that encounter that opened his heart, mind, and soul to experience and understand the things of God. On the other hand, the Pharisees had not availed themselves to encounter the Christ and hence they did not have in mind the things of God. So, I say again, avail yourself to encounter Christ. Open your heart, your mind, and your soul to receive Christ. Allow yourself to experience Christ.

### **3.3 Others have proclaimed the gospel because of their encounter with Christ**

The blind beggar’s experience is similar to the two men who encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus. It was that encounter that enabled them to understand the scriptures with

warmth of heart which caused them to rush back to Jerusalem to proclaim the gospel with experiential knowledge. Recall that it was the Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus that caused her to proclaim to his town that Jesus is the Christ. Recall also that it was Paul's encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road that caused him to proclaim that Jesus is Lord. There is the case of Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, Philip, and many other instances from scripture that time and space will not permit me to cite that show that an encounter with Jesus causes the person to come to experiential knowledge of God and hence enable the person to proclaim, with confidence and without fear of retribution, the gospel. You must avail yourself to encounter Jesus so that you can experience him personally to enable you to proclaim the good news to others. Avail yourself to him today so that you can begin to share the good news with others.

#### **4 The Pharisees then attacked the credibility of the blind man**

In verse 28, 29, and 34 of our passage we read that, "They hurled insults at him and said, 'You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from. You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!'" Failing to win the blind beggar to their side they decided to attack his credibility. But in an odd way their insult admitted that the man had propounded Jesus' teaching correctly as they accuse him of being a long-standing disciple of Jesus. They insulted him, they demeaned him, they belittled him, and then they threw him out of the synagogue.

If you resist people who want to control you by their mystic spiritualism they will turn on you. They will gossip about you and malign your name and make people treat you like an outcast. Such people have a Pharisaic spirit. In fact, you find how Pharisaic such people are by the way they introduce all kinds of "spiritual" laws for you to follow; these are merely man-made rules that have no basis in the grace of Jesus Christ. Resist such people. Flee from such people. Stick to biblical principles. Stick to Godly principles. Rather, avail yourself to encounter Christ. Open your heart, your mind, and your soul to receive Christ. Allow yourself to experience Christ.

## **5 Jesus came to the blind man's rescue**

### **5.1 Jesus became his companion when the Pharisees rejected him**

When Jesus heard the blind man had been thrown out of the Synagogue he went looking for him and found him. Jesus engaged him in a conversation and assured him that he did the right thing in resisting the Pharisees. When you are persecuted for your stand against a Pharisaic spirit Jesus will come to your rescue. You will not be alone, because he will come looking for you and talk to you to assure you that your stand is right by God.

### **5.2 Jesus' follow-up teaching turned his thanksgiving for healing into worship for salvation**

After receiving the assurance from Jesus, our passage tells us that the blind beggar worshipped Jesus. Now his encounter with Jesus has been made complete. His theological understanding arising out of his encounter has issued in worship. Someone has said theology that does not issue in worship is useless. The teaching of God must bring you to revere God so that you can worship God. A miracle must not result in viewing God as the provider but viewing God as the savior. Jesus' follow-up teaching moved the man's perspective from miracle to worship.

### **5.3 You also need to focus on Jesus as savior rather than provider**

All too often people focus on the provision of God rather than the saving grace of God. It is the deep recognition of the saving grace of God that issues in intense worship. Whereas provision is good and issues in thanksgiving it does enable you to recognize the awesomeness of the sacrificial work of Christ. You must avail yourself to encounter Christ so that your experience will inform your theology and issue in worship. Open yourself to encounter the living God and to enable you to worship God and evangelize others.

## **6 Conclusion**

The Pharisees were naysayers who wanted the blind man to join them. But the blind man rejected the Pharisees on grounds Jesus is a prophet. The Pharisees told the blind man to recognize their spiritual superiority and take Jesus as a sinner. But he resisted their attempts. So also, you must resist Pharisaic people who come across as mystically spiritual to avoid coming under their control.

The blind man refused to join them because of his personal encounter with Christ. He used his testimony to overcome the Pharisees' temptation. Instead he launched an apologetic of the gospel based on his experience of Christ. Others such as the Emmaus disciples, the Samaritan woman, Nicodemus, Philip, Zacchaeus, and Paul have proclaimed the gospel because of their encounter with Christ.

When they failed to convince him, the Pharisees then attacked his credibility. But Jesus came to the blind man's rescue. He became his companion and gave him a discipleship training, which turned his thanksgiving for healing into worship for salvation. You also need to focus on Jesus as savior rather than provider. When you encounter Jesus you will experience him as savior. Avail yourself to encounter Jesus today and you will never be the same again.