

John 9

Aim of Lesson

To show how Jesus made a blind man see, and taught that many people, who can see, are spiritually blind.

Background study

Isaiah 35:5; Matthew 13:13-17; John 1:6-14; 8:12. Find information about the Pool of Siloam, the practice of begging, and the power of the Sanhedrin.

Suggested outline of lesson

Describe the sad figure of the blind beggar whom Jesus and the disciples saw as they were walking through Jerusalem. Help the children to try and appreciate, in some measure, the isolation felt by someone who has never been able to see. Descriptive words like blue, beautiful, clear, patterned can have no meaning for the blind. The only shapes they can imagine are those to be felt. This man was unable to work and had resigned himself to standing in the crowded street and begging from passers-by. The disciples were so upset to see this man that they were compelled to ask Jesus why such a terrible thing should have happened to him. Was it a punishment for something his parents had done, or because the man himself was bad? Jesus dismissed this idea and explained that this presented him with the opportunity to demonstrate God's power and to show that he had come to bring light to the world. Unlike many who clamoured to be healed, this man seemed to be unaware of the work of Jesus, and it was Jesus who took the initiative and approached the man.

Neither the clay nor the water held miraculous properties, but Jesus, in his understanding of the man's disability, communicated his intention to heal by touch and roused the man to respond by giving him a clear instruction to follow. Hopefully, the blind man obeyed and his obedience was rewarded. To be able to see for the first time in his life was overwhelming. Joy came with the realization that he was no longer blind; then wonder, as he took in the colourful scene around him and the movement of people. There was the puzzle of identifying objects which he had previously only felt, because his brain had now to interpret what his eyes were seeing for the first time. As he tried to hurry back to thank Jesus, he discovered that walking by sight was a strange and new experience.

On meeting his neighbours again, there was confusion on both sides; he could not, of course, recognize their faces and had to listen to their voices in order to know who was who. They were perplexed for, although they recognized him as their blind friend, they could not understand how it was possible for him to see.

One might have expected that everyone would have been thrilled for the man, but not the Pharisees. Explain to the children that they were extremely strict in their observance of the law, which stated that no one must work on the Sabbath. When they learned of the healing they were at first sceptical and then indignant, regarding such a cure as work and, therefore, a serious infringement of the law. The Pharisees were also jealous of Jesus and tried to deny the evidence of his miraculous power. It would appear that the man knew very little about Jesus but, in defending him and refuting the blind prejudice of the Pharisees, he came to see that only the Son of God, as prophesied in the scriptures, could have given him his sight. His confession of faith so angered the religious leaders that they turned him out of the synagogue. This would no doubt have meant that many people would have nothing to do with him.

Jesus was aware of the controversy that had arisen because of the miracle, and when he learned that the man had been cast out of the synagogue he went to find him and make himself known to him. The man was seeing Jesus' face for the first time, but he gladly recognized him as the Son of God, thanked him and worshipped. Jesus was pleased that the blind man could now see him, not only with his eyes but with his understanding also; whereas the Pharisees had witnessed his healing power with their own eyes, but were blind to the fact that Jesus was their promised Messiah.

Relevance to the children's lives

What do we mean when we say: "I see", or "Don't you see?" We can read with our own eyes the stories in the Bible and we can enjoy them. But do we sometimes fail to see the messages in them, which tell us how we should live? God wants us not only to know, but also to understand.

Worksheets

These should be self-explanatory.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, open our eyes to see what is beautiful, our minds to know what is true, our hearts to love what is good. Amen.

Memory verse

"Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'" (John 8:12).