

Baptismal Service

Changed in an Instant (John 9:1-16 & 24-25)

We've heard a lot about war in the past week. As well as remembering the past, we have heard news of soldiers continuing to be killed in Iraq. One moment they were patrolling, the next their lives were changed, lost as they were fired upon or bombs exploded.

But let's look at this another way. Sometimes people's lives can be changed suddenly in more pleasurable ways such as the lottery winner who now lives in Swaffham.

One of the things you get aware of as one gets older is the frailty of life. You can have hopes and expectations one day and the next it has all changed because of a sudden health problem. Or what about an accident. - something about someone who has suddenly done well for themselves.

This was true of the man born blind. He had no expectation that his life was going to be changed. No-one had ever heard of a person born blind receiving their sight. There was no expectation.

Until Jesus came along! This guy was just sitting there minding his own business and this stranger comes along, rubs mud in his eyes and then tells him to wash in the pool of Siloam. So there he is at the pool washing his eyes - "What did that man rub mud in his eyes for" "What's that?" "It's light!" Wow I can see!

Why mud in his eyes? It wasn't the mud that made him see. It meant that by the time he got back Jesus would have gone and he had never seen Him.

It would precipitate the amazing debate afterwards. I want us though to look at this whole event from the perspective of this rather bewildered man! He's going round absolutely shocked - and no-one can believe it's him!

Encounters with Jesus changes lives! We've come here this morning to see Graham and Laura testify that the Lord has changed their lives because they trust Jesus.

So what can this story tell us about trusting Jesus?

Unexpected

God acts when we least expect it and in ways we least expect

For those of you who are Christians here this morning, I think that you know what I'm talking about. We've already been surprised by God's graciousness to us in this past year. Not even I thought things would proceed so quickly.

What are your expectations of life? Where is life taking you? Where is your life going for you? If you were to die tonight, would you be sure you were going to heaven. I suspect that many might say "you can't be sure". But the most exciting thing is that people can have eternal life and be sure of it

In fact the Bible was written so that people can know just that. But how do we get it? How much does it cost? Surely I could never be good enough to actually deserve it?

True, and the Bible actually says that "the wages of sin is death" but the

exciting thing is that it then goes on to say that the "gift of God is eternal life".

So eternal life is FREE! It s a gift!

God offers us that gift because He loves us and because of this, His Son, Jesus Christ took the penalty that we deserved for sin and died in our place, so that we could know forgiveness from sin and be acceptable to God.

The most important thing about a gift is that it becomes ours only when we receive it. God is offering you that gift right now. How do I receive this gift?

For by grace (undeserved favour) you have been saved (delivered from sin's penalty) through faith, and that not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works so that no-one can boast . Eph 2:8-9

You need to trust in Jesus to forgive you your sins and God will give you the gift of eternal life. That's why Graham and Laura have been baptised - to testify that they have trusted Jesus to wash away their sins and live a new life.

This Jesus stuff is fine for you. It' s fine for Graham or Laura. But me - no.

👉 **Unimaginable**

Jesus changed the man's life beyond his wildest dreams.

Jesus changes people's lives. Jesus changed this man's life.

It' s not unusual today to here about how some amazing operation has resulted in the restoration of someone' s sight. But when Jesus healed this man, something incredible happened. People who receive their sight who became blind during their lives always see things again properly, but people who are born blind often have problem seeing things as to see we need to have properly seeing eyes and our brain must have become trained to process data from our eyes. Unfortunately, that system is fixed in our teenage years and an adult acquiring sight after that actually finds it difficult to see. They see the shapes and colours but can' t make sense of them.

This man didn' t have the problem. He knew where he was and what he was doing. this miracle went well beyond what they knew and understood then and what we know and understood now.

The man had no expectation of the nature of the change. Yet in an instant Jesus had changed his life. It was astounding. Can you imagine his emotions - stunned -happy, joyous, astonished.

The most remarkable thing about the Christian faith is that we do not join a club - but we start to live in a totally new way. we have different aims. The time scale is no longer next week, or next year. It' s forever. Christianity is not just for Christmas, its for life!

You' ve all heard of Speakers' Corner in London. It' s where all the people with strange ideas come to pronounce them. **Once a Communist was talking to a crowd about the virtues of Communism. A tramp shuffled past. The speaker noticed him. "Communism" he declared, "will put a new suit of clothes on that man!". "So what?" a Christian shouted from the crowd - Jesus Christ will put a new man in that suit of clothes.**

The Christian faith is about newness of life - its about purpose, direction. That's what Graham and Laura have attested today.

Maybe you've come here this morning because you've been invited. Jesus has the power to change lives. You might not have been expecting it, but Jesus wants to deal with the problems and issues in your lives that concern you and those things that keep you from a relationship with God that He so much wants to have with you.

Unappreciated

People will always try to knock people who believe in Jesus!

Whenever something amazing happens, someone will always try to knock it. The Pharisees tried it. Because Jesus didn't do things the way they did, then it didn't suit them. You would have thought that they would have been pleased that the man had received his sight. What a wonderful thing to happen! Not on your life! They were angry - they interrogated the man and finally threw him out of the temple. They didn't want to respond to his statement "Once I was blind but now I can see?". You might find Christianity a little difficult to explain - but do you know of any other way of being sure of sins forgiven and eternal life?

The man's response was quite a simple one when the Pharisees ridiculed Jesus - say what you like - once I was blind but now I see.

Maybe you're sceptical about Jesus Christ this morning. You can't understand why Laura and Graham want to get wet in front of loads of people. Remember this, I don't have all the answers in life, Graham doesn't have all the answers to life, Laura doesn't have all the answers to life, this Church doesn't have all the answers - but what we do know is that we testify to whom we have trusted, we preach about Jesus who is our Saviour and friend. You can knock us but you can't take it away from us.

Unconditional

The man thought Jesus was worth giving his life to unconditionally.

9:35 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" 36 "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." 37 Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." 38 Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him. Finally, the man, meets Jesus. What was his response? The man worshipped him.

When we really get to understand who Jesus is, and what he is like there is only one response - we worship him. What is worship - it is an expression of the WORTH of Christ. What's Jesus WORTH to you.

Maybe you wouldn't call yourself a Christian but you have been faced up with something unexpected this morning. Go wants to know you personally this morning and the offer is there come and find forgiveness in Jesus Christ, eternal life and a new way of living here on earth. He want you to accept Him this morning.

It maybe that you've been a Christian for some time and you are saying, I want to follow him, I want to be his disciple.

There is a simple response to that - in the book of Acts which records what the early Christians did. Was that people believed and were baptised. Jesus last words were:

Matt 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey

everything I have commanded you. And I am with you always even to the end of the age.

Buying flowers for my wife is a token of love. And this is what baptism is this morning. What's Jesus worth to you? Maybe you've never been baptised. Perhaps you've never really thought about it. But if we love Jesus, if we understand all he went through for us - the suffering, the pain the agony of the Cross so that we could become his people. That was a token of our worth to him. What is a token of what he is worth for us? He just simply asks us to make a public profession of faith in baptism. Actually He commands it. Are you ready to follow him?

Prayers of Confession

Father God

I want to know you.

I need you.

Thank you that you have always loved me.

Thank you for sending Jesus for dying on the cross for me

Please forgive me for all the sins I have committed.

I accept Your gift of eternal life

I turn from all the things that displease you

And to desire to follow You in newness of life.

In Jesus' name

Amen

Lord Jesus

As I look at all you have done for me on the cross

I come before you desiring to do Your will and the will of Your Father in heaven.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, I pray that you will give me the strength to follow and obey You, not just in the big issues; but in the simple matters like being baptised.

In Jesus name

Amen



*Preached by Mark Reid
Swaffham Baptist Church
16/11/03
Scripture quotes from NIV*