

Thought for Sunday 27th September 2020

Pastor Gordon Hamilton

After just over six months of sending out these 'Thoughts for Sunday' and with most churches having made arrangements to enable some form of service to take place, I feel it is time for me to stop sending out these messages, unless anyone wants me to continue.

Read John 9:1-34

There is a saying; *'There are none so blind as those who do not want to see.'* And as we see over and over again, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law did not want to see. They were certain they were right and even though they saw Jesus do miraculous signs, they could not accept he was the Son of God. Jesus said this would happen right at the beginning of his ministry, in his 'home' town of Nazareth, at least that was what the people believed, because that was where he was brought up. Luke 4:24; *'I tell you the truth, no prophet is accepted in his home town,'* those were the words of Jesus. For the second time, as we look at John's gospel, we see Jesus performing a miracle on the Sabbath. I'm sure that Jesus didn't go out of his way to upset the authorities, and I'm sure the disciples didn't set Jesus up to go against the Pharisees. When they saw the man who was born blind, the disciples just asked the question; *'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'* They knew Jesus was the messiah, so they knew that if they asked him a question, they would get a honest answer. In some ways it is a strange question, but I'm sure that we have all asked questions when we see children who are born, with what some people believe to be, some defect or other. Some years ago we knew of thalidomide and the problems that it left some children with. I'm sure the drug was very good in treating some people, but not with pregnant women. The disciples may well have been aware of the words of Exodus 4:11 where we read; *'The Lord said to him, 'Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord?'* That may seem a hard thing to understand, and maybe they wondered if the parents had sinned, and therefore the Lord may have punished them for some sin or other. Jesus answers them; *'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.'* And we know *'the works of God were displayed in him.'* As far as Jesus was concerned, while he was here on earth, he was going to do whatever it took to alleviate any discomfort or disability that he came into contact with. And it didn't matter whether it was the Sabbath or any other day of the week. Verse 4; *'as long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me.'* Had Jesus wanted to, he could have done away with all sicknesses and diseases at a stroke, but he gave us free will, so we can choose whether we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour or not. Surely there has to be some form of judgement when we do something wrong. Again I come back to what Jesus said in John 3:16; *'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.'* So we need to be aware of those last few words, *'God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him,'* through Jesus. The Jews knew the Messiah was coming but they didn't recognise Jesus as being him. Jesus says; *'As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me ... I am the light of the world.'* For this man who was born blind, Jesus really was to bring light into his life and for the first time in his life he could see. We are told; *'Jesus spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 'Go,' he told him, 'wash in the Pool of Siloam.'* The man did what Jesus told him to do and went home seeing. How he knew his way home I don't know. His neighbours couldn't believe what had happened, they couldn't believe someone born blind

could suddenly see. I'm sure we have seen medical miracles on our televisions, where someone who has lost the use of their limbs have been given artificial limbs, and many people have been given a fresh opportunity to see again through laser treatment. I will always a member of Cophthorne Chapel who had glaucoma and had an operation, came to chapel the next Sunday and said; 'I can see the hymn numbers!' her daughter also said that when she looked through her wardrobe she was unable to see her brown skirt. Her daughter had to explain that it was pink and only looked brown because of the glaucoma, now that was gone her sight had been restored. Two thousand years ago there was no laser treatment, but there was Jesus, who, as Paul writes in Ephesians 3:20 '*is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.*' But if we look at how that verse continues; '*according to his power that is at work within us.*' So we may think that we're not able to do what Jesus did, and we may not be able to heal anyone by spitting on the ground, making mud with the saliva and putting it on a blind persons eyes, but there are people out there who God uses to heal people, some through their medical know how, but I shared with a church last Sunday how I prayed for a young man 19 years ago, 23rd September 2001 on the Isle of Wight, he was about 10 or 11 and had a deformed leg. He asked me to pray for his leg that he would be able to play football. I did and nine months later when I went back to preach in that church, he came running up the aisle with his football trophy. It wasn't me that healed him, it was; '*His power at work within me.*' To God be the glory. I have no idea who that young boy was or what the future has held for him but I pray he gave God the glory, and continues to do so. In memory of a friend from Hailsham, Geoff Francis, whose funeral was this last Monday, Geoff's favourite hymn:

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit!
O what needless pain we bear!
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there.