

**Sermon for Mothering Sunday; St George's Eastergate;
March 22nd.**

In our Gospel reading for today, from Chapter 9 of John's Gospel, we read of a third encounter Jesus had with an individual which is described in detail by our evangelist. In all these conversations Jesus enlightens them about fundamental spiritual truths. Firstly we had the conversation with Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader; next was a conversation with a Samaritan woman; an outsider shunned by the society of her day. Today we read of Jesus encounter with a man who had been blind from birth. He was also an outsider because the culture of his day assumed his blindness to have been caused by sin; either his own or his parents.

This is an extraordinary story and I make no apology for reading it in its entirety. Do read it again and reflect on it because there are so many details that have much to teach us. I am just going to outline a few.

Firstly I note that the disciples knew only too well what people in general thought about this man and his family but what they now wanted to know was what Jesus' own view was. I suspect they themselves thought that He might well think somewhat differently. As I ponder on this I think how often we can be confused by strange ideas that we hear around us, or read on Facebook! How often do we take time

to try and find out what Jesus' perspective is on the matter in hand?

Next, and rather obviously, the man himself was clearly bemused, but he followed Jesus' instructions and was healed. He didn't know how or why but he was in no doubt that it happened and that Jesus was the man who had made it happen; he was prepared to tell anyone that.

The onlookers were divided. Not all wanted to believe that Jesus could help or heal?

Lastly, we are reading this on Mothering Sunday; the day in the year when we focus on families and mothers in particular. This man's parents were called to account for what had happened. I wonder what it was like for them to witness this and have no explanation for it, other than the evidence of their own eyes. To see their son healed after all those years. To be unable to protect him from the fury of the religious authorities. Think of his mother; both parents were frightened of the angry reaction from the authorities but were prepared to let their son speak his own mind on the matter. To speak out for himself about what Jesus had done for him.

Of course this leads us on to reflect on what it must have been like for Jesus' own mother and family as they watched Him respond fearlessly to God's calling. More of that as we move towards the Cross.

We thank God today for the power of Jesus to heal and enlighten us; most particularly in these distressing and puzzling times. We ask Him to empower us, to strengthen our faith, and to enlighten us as we spread the light of Christ here in Eastergate.

AMEN.