

“All I Know”

by Greg Smith-Young (Elora-Bethany Pastoral Charge)

John 9:24-34

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Read the Scripture by clicking [here](#).

Repeatedly calling him “the man born blind,” can get tedious. We are not told his name. So I am going to call him “Patch.” As in, the patch that gets worn over a blind eye.

Notice what Jesus *did not do*.

Upon seeing Patch begging on the street, Jesus *did not* send his disciples to rap on the neighbourhood’s doors, sweep through the marketplace crowds and announce from the rooftops, “*Come one and come all! Step right up! See what Jesus is going to do.*” If Jesus had wanted to turn Patch into a spectacle, a step on his own way to fame, Jesus could have done that. But he did not.

Notice what else Jesus *did not do*.

After giving sight for the first time into Patch’s darkened eyes, Jesus *did not* hustle him off to the local judges of all that was right and good, who had their diplomas and degrees framed on their walls and strings of letters behind their names, and who were sceptical of Jesus’ claims and suspicious of his agenda. Jesus *did not* show up at The Pharisees Professional Association and say, “*I told you! Look what I can do. I made Patch see. Now do you believe me?*” Jesus could have done that. But he did not.

Instead, Jesus left. Jesus left it to Patch to explain all this to his neighbours. Jesus left it to Patch to deal with the Pharisees.

Why does Jesus do that?

II

Clearly, Patch is at a great disadvantage . . . though he has one decisive advantage.

He is at a disadvantage. Patch does not know how it happened. Of course, he knows what Jesus did. Jesus took mud, made from earth and spit, and smeared it on his eyes. Jesus sent him to a pool of water to wash. When he washed, he began to see. He knows what happened. But he does not know how it all worked. He cannot explain it.

He does not have to.

He is at a disadvantage. Patch has not read Craig Keener’s recent two-volume, thousand

-page masterpiece, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*.¹ He has not read C. S. Lewis' classic, *Miracle: A Preliminary Study*. He has not read philosophers like David Hume or Antony Flew (who were convinced miracles cannot happen.) He has not read John Earman or Richard Swineburne (philosophers who are convinced they can).² None of these were around to write anything yet. In fact, Patch has not read anything! He has always been blind.

He does not have to.

He is at a disadvantage. Patch does not know who Jesus is. He does not know where Jesus is from. He does not know whether Jesus is a sinner or not. He just met Jesus, and knows very little about him.

He does not have to. He has enough. Patch can see.

III

Those who are interrogating Patch are certain that they are the ones who see.

See! Jesus has done this healing work on the Sabbath. That's the one day a week when God commands us to not work. Jesus could have waited until the next day, but he insisted on doing his healing work on the Sabbath day. So see! Jesus is willfully defying God. He is a sinner! They are sure they see clearly. But because of what they are sure they see, they cannot see.

See! Jesus does not have the proper credentials. He has not submitted his resume for review. So see! Jesus has no authority for what he is doing. They are sure they see clearly. But because of what they are sure they see, they cannot see.

It is what they are certain they see clearly . . . that is keeping them from really seeing.

Then, there is Patch. Hours before, he could see nothing. Now he sees. Now, he sees the one thing they cannot see. It is the one thing that matters most.

Jesus has given him sight.

Before, he could not see. Now he can see. Between the "I could not see" and the "I can see" stands Jesus. He is it! He is all! That's all Patch knows.

¹ Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012.

² David Hume, "Of Miracles" in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (London: London: A. Millar, 1748). Antony Flew, "Miracles," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1967), 5:346-353. John Earman, *Hume's Abject Failure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Richard Swinburne, *Miracles* (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1989.)

Patch is in the dark about so many things. Yet the one bright light is Jesus. Because of Jesus, he can see.

That is his one advantage. It's the one thing Patch can offer that no one else can. And it's all he needs.

IV

You might remember *Bloom Country*, a comic strip in the 1980s by Berkeley Breathed.³ It had characters like Opus, the naively optimistic penguin who played tuba in a heavy metal band. And Bill, the brain-damaged cat who was both a televangelist and presidential candidate.⁴ Then, there was Oliver Wendell Jones, a schoolboy computer hacker whose mother often dressed him like Michael Jackson.

One strip had Oliver sitting on a rooftop.⁵ Above him are the never-ending stars in the night sky. He looks up. To the right. Then left, where the stars are arranged to proclaim "REPENT OLIVER." To which Oliver replies, "[It's sure] difficult being an agnostic these days."

Yah . . . if only God worked like that.

Because really, it's easy to be unsure about God. God isn't illuminating the sky with personal messages. God could, but God doesn't. That's not how the Light works.

Instead, Jesus the Light chooses to shine through us. We're like Patch, talking with our neighbours. We're like Patch, challenged by the sceptical.

And like Patch, we might very well feel disadvantaged. All those studies of miracles . . . I haven't read them. Those tough questions people ask: about God, about Jesus, about suffering, about world religions . . . do you feel your expertise bubbling out? (I study these things, yet I can still feel in over-my-head too.)

How God works is often a mystery to us. I can't explain it, any better than I can tell you why Jesus mixed his spit with dirt to make mud.

And yet, Jesus still chooses to shine through us.

V

I have a buddy who had quite a past. He was less-than-exemplary, in how he treated

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloom_County

⁴ Remarkably, in the late 1980s Bill the Cat became a transplant recipient of Donald Trump's brain! Apparently it was never returned to the original owner.
<https://www.theringer.com/2016/7/14/16039874/donald-trump-bloom-county-slumlord-73a0f5ca3c17>

⁵ You can see the strip here: <http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/1068/504/1600/repent1.gif>

others and how he treated himself. Eventually, his life crashed down, and he was in darkness. Then, Jesus the Light shone into his life. His experience wasn't spectacular or weird . . . it was through the local United Church!

My friend spent his working life as a railroader, conducting trains across northern Ontario. That makes for many long hours in a cab, with only the person beside him for company. Which could be good, or terrible. A lot of railroaders don't have smooth edges. You can imagine the sort of things that were soon being said to my friend about his new "religious" ways. A lot of ridicule and skepticism.

Listen to what my friend learned to say. *"I don't have it figured out. All I know is what my life used to be, and what it is now. It's because of Jesus."*⁶

It worked because they could see it too. And no one could argue with it.

All I know is, before I was blind. Now I can see.

The one big advantage you have is . . . you. You are the one thing you are the world's #1 expert about: you and what Jesus has been doing in you. What can you say about that? What difference is he making? How is he changing you? What is that darkness into which he is shining his light?

Jesus chooses to work this way. In you, others will see the Good News of Jesus.

⁶ Dale Bruner recounts a similar story: ". . . I came across the story of an English miner who had been converted in the Wesleyan revival and whose life had been greatly changed. So greatly changed that some of his fellow workers chided him rather mercilessly at lunch time. One day they asked him in jest, 'You didn't really believe that Jesus changed water into wine, do you?!' And the man replied in a way that reminds me very much of our chapter's man: 'I don't really know if Jesus actually changed water into wine. I wasn't there. But I do know one thing: In my house Jesus changed beer into furniture.'" Frederick Dale Bruner, The Gospel of John, A Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 589f.