Sermon John 9:1-41

March 22, 2020

4th Sunday in Lent

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Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

It is amazing sometimes how little has changed since Bible days isn’t it? We are people who like to figure out who is responsible for the things that seem wrong with the world and often we drag God into the conversation. Jesus and the disciples are in Jerusalem this morning, probably somewhere close to the temple. The disciples see a man who is blind. The man is completely minding his own business but he is bound to a life of begging because he has been blind from birth and he lives in a world that relies heavily on a person’s ability to see. The disciples don’t talk to the man or interact with him in any way. Instead they simply look at him and ask Jesus, “so who sinned here? Who shall we blame for the fact he can’t see? He’s been blind since birth…did he sin before he was born, or is this all his parent’s fault?”

Am I the only one who has been asking questions like that this week, as life in our community as we know it has essentially stopped? Our children don’t get to go to school. Our jobs have been drastically altered, and for some of us our pay checks right along with them. Our social lives have come to a screeching halt. We are worried about the virus hurting those we love (and we should all probably be concerned that it could hurt us as well). If you are my age you have probably given your parents a “stern talking to this week” as you have urged them to stay home…and if you are my parents age, you probably think that your kids are a real drag, and so is the media, and the mayor, and the governor and the bishop, and congress, and the president…and as we try to wrap our minds around this, I’m not the only one who has wondered who is to blame for all this, am I? I’m not the only one who wants to know who has sinned? If I knew who has sinned, maybe I’d know who to crucify when all of this is over.

Yet Jesus quickly turns the finger pointing around, and instead says, this is an opportunity to reveal the work of God. Then, he places mud in the blind man’s eyes and tells him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam which means “Sent.” When he does the mud fall from his eyes and for the first time in his whole life the blind man can see.

I can’t begin to imagine how confusing the world must have appeared to him as his mind went into overload taking in the whole world at one time. You know, none of us are born with fully developed sight because God, I think, knows that this would be overwhelming beyond measure. When a child is born they cannot see much beyond 2 feet…the approximate distance between their face and the face of the one who holds them close…because as a baby, that’s all we need to know. We need to know we are loved by the face of the one that holds us. With each passing month our vision develops and with it our sense of color and slowly we are able to hopefully see love reflected in more places than one.

Imagine this man, he had no sight at all. So he experienced the world through all the rest of his heightened senses, then all at once he sees everything…this is something that doctors still to this day can’t make happen. How does his world react? How would you react if this happened unexpectedly in our community? There is no party of joy that’s for sure…but there is every other reaction under the sun… “he’s lying…he’s not the man he says he is.” – or—“he’s the man…but we don’t know how this happened, or what to think about it.” They drag the man off to the religious authorities who question his story repeatedly. They bring in his parents weigh in on things. Each time the man tells about the work of God, and each time he tells the story it becomes a bit more solidified in his mind.

Each time he tells the story, he sees the power of God at work within him a bit more clearly. Has this ever happened to you? Have you ever come through a moment and looking back on it all thought, wow, God somehow saw me through that one…then when you tell others the story does the presence of God become a bit stronger in your mind with each passing re-telling? This I think in part is why stories must be told…not just to share our faith with others and potentially strength their faith, but also to solidify the work of God in our hearts and minds as we tell of the small miracles of the Lord around us. How do people react when we tell these stories? A lot like they do as they listen to the man who now can see. They shake their heads. They wonder if you might not be a touch superstitious. They accept the facts that you got through it but wonder about the way you spin the story. Yet, some hear and accept it, despite what others think, but even in the midst of the good news, perhaps, they are still worried about “sin.”

Last week I was listening to a story of a woman whose husband was diagnosed with COVID-19 and quarantined in Omaha. She too was quarantined for 14 days but never tested positive for the virus. When she came home, people in her community told her to stay away. They wouldn’t even let her dog sitter go back to her day job because of the contact the dog sitter had made with the family. We are afraid of what we can’t explain, and we either embrace and celebrate the miracle or we tend to drive out the so called unknown sin.

Yet here is the good news, God is at work in all places, and often cares for us and world in ways that we will never fully understand. How can we ever fully understand a God who loves us so much that he is willing to give his son to die for us so that even in death there is forgiveness and the promise that we are not alone? How can we wrap our mind around a God who lit up even death with the promise and the hope of new life? We can’t. We will never entirely wrap our mind around God’s love, yet the fact remains that as sure are Christ sent the blind man to wash away his darkness, God is at work revealing his light to us! Can we see it? Do we know the difference between light and darkness? Do we turn to light or close our eyes afraid that it might blind us? Perhaps we are a combination of all of these, but God is at work none the less, and each time we glimpse the work of God’s love in the world and call it what it is--a sign of God’s goodness, our trust in God’s promises grows stronger, I think, as it did for the blind man. It’s no small accident that God made children to first only see the face of the one who loves them…then slowly month by month their sight strengths until perhaps they can catch glimpses of love elsewhere all over the world around them as well.

Even in faith we are often afraid and quick to place blame and point out sins…yet Christ’s light shines in our darkness and calls us instead to trust…in the light of the world. Our Lord promises, “when you walk through the darkest valley’s I am with you. I provide what is needed. I protect you from your enemies, and you will dwell in my arms forever.” Now shine with God’s light in the world. Amen.