



Fourth Sunday in Lent March 22, 2020

Introduction

Baptism is sometimes called enlightenment. The gospel for today is the story of the man born blind healed by Christ. "I was blind, now I see," declares the man. In baptism God opens our eyes to see the truth of who we are: God's beloved children. In baptism God calls us to bear witness to the light of Christ in our daily lives.

Prayer of the Day

Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ, and come among us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Hymn of the Day

If You but Trust in God to Guide You

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Gospel: John 9:1-41

Jesus heals a man born blind, provoking a hostile reaction that he regards as spiritual blindness to the things of God.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

There is a question we have all been asking since we were toddlers: Why? As we grow up, we learn many answers to that question, even a scientific answer for why the sky is blue. But even for those who are wise in many things and mature in our faith, one question persists. It comes in several varieties: Why does God allow evil to exist? Or perhaps we ask why God allows pain, sickness, and death to occur.

There are entire seminary courses and many books written about this theological issue, with its formal name: theodicy. The question is often asked: How can a good and gracious God allow evil to happen in the world?

The disciples were really asking Jesus that same question when they wanted to know who sinned to cause the nameless man in today's gospel text to be born blind. Why did this happen, Lord?

The best answer I can offer is that sin and evil, pain and suffering come as a result of the free will that God has given to humanity. Sometimes our choices have obvious consequences in our own lives; in other situations, the choices made by others may be the cause of our pain. And sometimes, it is impossible for us to identify the source or cause of the pain we are experiencing.

In this gospel text Jesus does not really answer the question the disciples ask. Why this man was born blind is not the real issue. For Jesus, the important thing is what good God can bring about in a bad situation. Restoring sight to this one blind man allowed the power and glory of God to be visible to many.

Today, may we remember that God did not cause this specific mutation of coronavirus which is wreaking havoc around the world. Even more importantly, we should remember and trust – with hope that is stronger than fear – that God is still at work in the world. May our eyes be opened to see God at work at this time.

Watch with faith and pray for those who put themselves in harm's way for the sake of others. Help others in the ways that you can, which might be sewing medical masks, calling to check on others that are isolated, running necessary errands, or simply not hoarding items that someone else needs.

Most of all, right now, as we live in isolation, fasting from worship together during this Lenten season, we can remember that we do this not out of fear, but from an abundance of love and care for others, especially those who are most vulnerable. For all people are God's beloved children whom we are called to love.

Apostles' Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.**

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

O God, in our global distress we pray earnestly to you.
God our Sanctuary, gather us when separated into your presence.
God our Physician, heal those who have contracted the virus.
God our Comforter, embrace all who mourn the dead.
God our Homeland, mother all who are quarantined.
God our Friend, accompany all who are alone or afraid.
God our Guardian, protect physicians and nurses.
God our Hope, assist researchers searching for a vaccine.
God our Mighty Fortress, preserve our societies from devastation.
God our Governor, guide the leaders of nations toward wise policies.
God of Everlasting Arms, in you we live and move and have our being.
God our Creator, make once again a world of sabbath rest.
God our Savior, redeem the suffering world by your cross.
God our Light, shine your radiant peace into our darkness.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.
Amen.**

Closing Hymn

Amazing Grace

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ruth Ann Sipe.
Prayers for global distress were written by Gail Ramshaw.