

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt
Fourth Sunday in Lent - Year A
St. Paul's Lutheran Church - First Online Sermon for Coronavirus
1 Samuel 16:1-13
Psalm 23
Ephesians 5:8-14
John 9:1-41
03/22/2020

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. John

¹As [Jesus] walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, ⁷saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. ⁸The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." ¹⁰But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" ¹¹He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." ¹²They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know." ¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. ¹⁷So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet." ¹⁸The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" ²⁰His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." ²²His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." ²⁴So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." ²⁵He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." ²⁶They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" ²⁸Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." ³⁰The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." ³⁴They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out. ³⁵Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." ³⁷Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." ³⁸He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. ³⁹Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are

we?” 41 Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.”
The Gospel of our Lord

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Covid-19 Sermon

Good morning! It began just over a month ago. I started seeing a post from an account called “Bunker John” every day about the virus and how it was spreading. I wasn’t worried, after all, the account was called Bunker John, but I figured I would remain cautious. Then I heard about the masks. I happened to be in Home Depot for something else, but I figured I would swing by the mask aisle anyway, just to look. They were almost all gone. I checked online, the price had increased by 3 times the usual price. When it hit Washington state people really started to worry. In just a few weeks we’ve seen something unprecedented. Even after we learned that masks wouldn’t necessarily stop the infection, they remain hard to find. Hospitals and doctors offices are reporting that people continue to steal gloves and masks. Hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disinfectant spray were the next things to go. Then I saw the strangest thing; a video went viral of a grocery store security camera where people descended like animals onto the toilet paper aisle, and by the end of the day it was gone.

Such is the state of our world, here in March of 2020. We have seen grocery stores go empty of essential food, while industry grinds to a halt. Schools are closed, most jobs have switched to telecommuting, and pigs must be flying because the REPUBLICANS are behind a trillion dollar bill that would see most of the country receiving a government handout!

The words of the blind man in today’s Gospel ring true: *“I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again?”* For so many people in the world right now, the panic has seized us, and we’re unable to see the truth. The anxiety and panic are very tempting. We see one person doing something and assume they know something we don’t, so we join in. It’s also a reminder of our most basic instincts; in an effort to ensure our survival we move to protect ourselves.

Earlier this week I was having a conversation with Pastor John Wertz, one of our Assistants to the Bishop. I was explaining how strange and unprecedented this was for me, and I asked if he had ever seen anything like this. He replied no, and most likely no one had since WWII. About an hour later I read an article from CNN that discussed this exact topic. The article was similar to Pastor John’s point, we haven’t been asked to sacrifice on this scale since the second World War. The article recounts some of the many ways the whole country pitched in to help the war effort, and how in order to control the spread of Covid-19, we are being challenged to do just the same thing.

Fortunately, sacrifice is something that Christians have been practicing for over two centuries! I would argue that Christianity is perfectly situated to embody the behavior and sacrifice that the world needs right now. God has been alive and active in our lives, and God is now pushing us to model the type of behavior that will protect the most vulnerable. While it can seem like a hopeless case right now, I’m here to tell you that it’s not! I confess that I am one of the most pessimistic people I know, and yet, I’m confident that God has equipped each and every one of you to help the whole human family! Martin Luther, 500 years ago, in a work titled “Temporal Authority, To What

Extent It Should Be Obeyed” argued that the Christian is called to suffer, especially when it means lifting up our fellow human beings from their own injustice. We suffer because Jesus Christ first suffered for us. There is no glory or higher calling to it, it’s simply sometimes necessary so that others may see a brighter future.

When we go above what we need, when we think selfishly, it can sometimes feel like we’re looking out for ourselves. When we do that, we can forget the faces of those who need protecting. The statistics become just that, numbers, graphs, and maps. But in today’s Gospel we see that one person’s struggle and pain are all it takes for God to act, bringing light and hope to a place where there was only darkness.

It wasn’t long after the virus began to spread across the country that the stories began to spread too. But this time, it wasn’t the fear. It was stories of hope. Pictures of dedicated health care workers with faces marked by the masks they’ve been wearing for 12 hour shifts, or stories of power company employees moving into cots at the power station to ensure that the electricity keeps running. Or, how when hospitals started running out of valves for defibrillators, the local community started 3D printing them for free. Each little story, a tiny flame that shines in the darkness, and man, together it burns brighter than the sun. Amen.