



FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT
March 22, 2020

Prayer of the Day

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff — they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long.

Psalm 23

Call to Confession

When we walk through the darkest valley God is with us to hear our prayers.
In faith and penitence let us confess our sin.

Prayer of Confession

Lord Jesus, we confess that we fail to question our own blindness. Being so sure that we "see," we miss the truths you would teach us. With the poultice of your love, cure this blindness. Open our eyes to our own misunderstandings, our own failures, and our own faults.
Make our darkness known to us and help us to illuminate it with the light of your grace.
For it is only when we see ourselves clearly that we can worship you truly. We pray in your name.
Amen.

Assurance of God's Grace and Forgiveness

God's grace is amazing and overcomes our darkness with the light of love.
Believe the good news. Your sins are forgiven.

John 9:1-41

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth.

His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent).

Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

The 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?"

Some were saying, "It is he."

Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him."

He kept saying, "I am the man."

But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?"

He 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."

They said to him, "Where is he?"

He said, "I do not know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then 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."

Some 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.

So 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."

The 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 and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but 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." His 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. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

So 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."

He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He 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?"

Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."

The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?"

And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him."

Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he."

He said, "Lord, I believe."

And he worshiped him.

Jesus 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."

Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?"

Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

Meditation

Was Blind But Now I See

Rev. Terry Epling

Today's scripture reading begins with a question for Jesus, Who sinned that this man was born blind? The disciples assume that the reason for the man's blindness is sin. Jesus rejects that assumption out of hand. His blindness has nothing to do with sin at all, Jesus teaches them. But rather his blindness is an occasion for doing "God's works."

This story about who is responsible when bad things happen is the inspiration for the much-loved hymn *Amazing Grace. I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.*

Bad things happen in our world. Sometimes people are born blind. And, as we are learning, the whole world can be slowed to a stop by a new virus as it spreads its deadly poison. These things happen, not as the direct result of our individual sin, but because we live in a fallen, dynamic, ever-evolving world where beauty and terror exist side by side.

The point of Jesus' teaching here is that in any circumstance our concern should be less about what error of the past caused it, but instead, how do we live in this reality in a way that is life-giving, healing, creative, and loving. This is the occasion, not for placing blame, but for doing God's work, for sharing God's amazing grace with those who are scared, those who are lonely, those who are sick.

The Psalm for today is the 23rd. Everyone knows it, probably in the King James Version. *Ye though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou are with me.* Such comforting words in uncertain times. God is here with us. God is using our current circumstance to bring light and hope, peace and love. Our cup overflows.

It is the fourth Sunday of Lent. As we settle in to a different routine, marked by less social interaction and more time at home, let's remember that God's work is still in our hands. Let us not be blind to those in need around us. Let us not allow isolation to keep us apart. If anything, we are more aware than ever that we are all interconnected as a human family. We need one another.

We cannot forget that the point of the Lenten season is to prepare us for the new life that Easter promises. In this dark valley God is with us and Easter is coming. Thanks be to God!

Prayer

Loving Shepherd, you lead and guide, you walk alongside, you prepare, you feed, you call, all of your sheep, even those of us who are blind, those of us who stray constantly, those of us who stay close to your comforting staff.

We are grateful for the lush green pastures of our lives, and we pause now to offer our thanksgivings for the goodness in our lives...

There are so many who walk in the shadows of fear and suffering and despair, and we pause now, to offer our prayers for the broken and hurting places in this world...

We also offer our prayers for the sheep of our own flocks, in our families and friends, in this our church and our community...

O Loving Shepherd, we have all we need, as we live in you.

Thank you. Amen.

Tithes and Offerings

You can mail your offerings to the church at 300 West Wayne St, Fort Wayne, IN 46804. If you use your bank's e-bill feature you can set up automatic bill pay to the church. You can reach Michelle Adams 260-426-7421 x116 with any questions about your pledge or offerings.

Prayer of the Week

Into your spacious heart
and loving hands, dear God,
I place my fears, my "what ifs,"
my spinning world and mind...
Comfort me with the truth.
No fear is too big for the
Great One, who is always with me.
I am never alone.
Calming God, bring courage.
Tender Spirit, breathe peace.
Gentle Jesus, be close.
Amen.