

Fourth Sunday in Lent –2023

Isaiah 42:14-21

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

The blind man didn't say a thing. The man born blind didn't utter a mournful "Lord, have mercy" in order to provoke a divine response. There was no cry of the heart or a perfectly phrased prayer; nonetheless, Jesus saw him. And the disciples posed a question. Whose fault is this? (John 9:2) That was the religious thinking of the day – physical maladies could be traced back to someone, somewhere doing something wrong. Nope; I'm not playing that game. My glory is to be manifest in this man. The works of God will sing in the life of this blind man (John 9:3). Blindness; it is frequently associated with unbelief in the Scriptures. Well, the Lord Christ is light incarnate (John 8:12). He casts out darkness. He brings an epiphany to your heart. He opens blind eyes. Faith is sight. Faith sees Christ for precisely who He is, precisely *what* He is (2 Corinthians 4:6). Faith delights to see Jesus, delights to see His majesty, His grace, His kingdom (Matthew 16:16).

God created man from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7). Almighty God is the Almighty Potter who breathes life into lifeless clay (Isaiah 64:8). The Lord Christ had worked with this medium before (John 1:3). The dust of the earth is familiar to the Creator. Jesus was sent to do the works of the One who sent Him (John 9:4). His work was and is to give sight to the blind. The Creator spits and makes mud, anoints the man's eyes with the mud, and tells the blind man to wash. In a special pool, the blind man was to wash. In a pool specifically named, the man, whose life will be testament to God's glory, was to wash. "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing" (John 9:7). A miracle! It's an astounding revelation of God's presence in Israel (Isaiah 35:5). The blind receive their sight. And that miracle is not a cause for rejoicing but for arguing. Jesus seemingly disappears from the scene and the blind man, who now sees, becomes a witness.

The Pharisees have only one objective: discredit Jesus. That's it; nothing more; their minds are made-up, locked-up and they begin interrogating the unnamed man with singleness of purpose. On and on it goes. The blind man simply states the truth. He recounts the events accurately and that inflames the Pharisees even more. His parents are dragged into the argument and they get weak-kneed because they don't want to lose their place in the synagogue (they are afraid of getting cancelled). Pressure is rife. The antagonism is palpable. Earthly power resides with the Pharisees, the religious rulers. The formerly blind man is seemingly alone; vulnerable and alone. But isn't he beautiful? Isn't the blind man beautiful? He sees and He confesses Christ. The religious elite are blind. Faithless, they fail to see the wonder of Almighty God bringing His new creation into their fallen world. The spiritually blind don't know that they are spiritually blind. I'm not sure if you've caught on yet, but in case you haven't allow me to make it real simple. That blind man is you.

Christ found you. Apart from you doing anything, the Lord saw you in your iniquity, in your powerlessness, in your unbelief, in your sin and your death and He claimed you for Himself. You are baptized, washed in Christ, the Sent One (Hebrews 3:1). Faith is alive in your heart (Ephesians 2:8-9). You see the world aright. You see your Savior, crucified and majestic, grace

pouring out of His bleeding flesh. You are sitting in His church, hearing His Word, acknowledging His presence. You are enlightened. You have had the eyes of your heart opened to see His kingdom coming as He hangs on a cross (Ephesians 1:18). St. Peter wrote this about you: “Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8-9). That blind man is every believer. You see that Jesus is the Son of God and that He truly is the Light of the World (John 8:12). And the world is still blind (2 Corinthians 4:4). Oh, they think that they see; but unbelief is a blindness of the soul that is incapable of self-diagnosis (John 9:40-41). It is wretched, it is oppressive, and it is very, very sad.

The formerly blind man is beautiful, I say. He bears witness to the One who healed him. That man is steadfast; he is humble, plainspoken, unyielding and happy. Is that you? Does your faith make you happy? Is your faith the most precious thing you have? Has the Lord Christ saved your immortal soul by dying and rising? Has your sin been paid for by the blood of the Messianic King? Did He find you? Did He love you? Did He transfer you from darkness into His eternal light? Will you say as much to the world, regardless of how you will be treated? You are beautiful. The filthy rags of your self-righteousness have been washed in the blood of Christ and you are adorned with His glory (Isaiah 64:6; Ephesians 5:25-27). Radiant, holy, you are a Christian. He found you. He washed you. He has placed His Spirit in you. He feeds you. He forgives you. He consoles and teaches and illuminates you. You are beautiful.

The man born blind was, himself, the work of God. Not merely in the fact that he is given his sight, but in the fact that he becomes a “seeing” man, a man defined by faith and the knowledge of God. Make no mistake; Jesus was with that fellow throughout the interrogation he suffered at the hands of the Pharisees. You are a “seeing” man. You are a “seeing” woman. When the world uses you are a pawn to discredit Jesus, who is with you? Who is at work in you to will and to act according to His good purpose (Philippians 2:13)? Who is it that never leaves you, never forsakes you (Deuteronomy 31:8)? You are now, and ever shall be, His witness (Acts 1:8). You will proclaim the glory of Him who called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). Freedom is found there; in being a faithful witness. You know the difference between darkness and light. You know what poverty, what emptiness and futility are found by rooting around in faithless living. You cannot turn away from the light for Christ and His love pulls at you; truth pulls at you; Easter pulls at you; heaven pulls at you. You are a child of the light. You are a child of Christ the King. Darkness is not your friend.

At the end of the episode, Jesus reappears. The Lord “finds” the man and leads him deeper into the truth, leads him to worship (John 9:38). The formerly blind man is transferred from the synagogue of the Jews to the synagogue of Jesus. The Jews had cast the man out (John 9:34). Jesus brings Him further into the Light. His voice gives way to His face. At the beginning of this episode, the blind man heard Jesus’ voice and now he sees Jesus’ face. Might that be you? You know His voice. Someday you will see His face. “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” (John 9:35). That fellow is so beautifully primed. An aria of faith is ready to erupt out his heart to answer that question. “Lord, I believe.” Christ is alive in that blind man. Christ’s story is the church’s story, your story. Jesus said this earlier: “We must do the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work” (John 9:4). Who is the “we?” Who is

the “we” that Jesus refers to? It is the blind man and Him. It is you and Him. His story is your story. All Christology is ecclesiology and all ecclesiology is Christology. The church and Christ are one (John 17:2-23).

You are, in your very person, a work of Christ’s redeeming love. Faith and light and hope are alive in you. You are Christ to the world. The works of God are displayed in you. Why? Because you believe!