

**THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT**  
*An In-Home Service of Word & Thanksgiving*  
*March 22, 2020*



*Jesus Heals the Blind Man*

**ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**85 E. Brandt Boulevard**  
**Landisville, PA**

*United in Christ,  
We are called to love and serve.*

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**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who is present, who gives life, who calls into existence the things that do not exist and opens our eyes to all around us. Amen.

God of light, in whom there is no darkness at all, we are not blinded by your glory though we are dazzled by it. Help us to see your light as we confess our sins to you.

*Time for reflection.*

Forgiving God,

You know us better than we know ourselves. You know our hearts and our thoughts, our motives as well as our actions. We confess that we tend to judge others and ourselves too much by appearances, by physical graces, by traditional manners rather than spontaneous helpfulness, and by announced intentions rather than actual behavior. We would dread your true judgment, except for the mercy and goodness you offer us through Jesus Christ, the one who sees and believes in us. Amen.

We are no longer blind but can see you as the source of all beauty, truth, and love. We are no longer children of darkness but children of your light. Help us hear the Good News! Though Christ we are forgiven. Amen.

**THE GREETING**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray. Holy God, our Light Source, the Light of our eyes, and the Light of our souls, open our eyes that we may see clearly and honestly, making judgments as you make them, and, turning from all darkness, live in the light of truth and goodness and justice for all. Amen.

## **† THE WORD †**

### **FIRST READING**

1 Samuel 16:1-13

The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.” Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.” And the LORD said, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.” Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, “Do you come peaceably?” He said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is now before the LORD.” But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. He said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.” Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.” Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen any of these.” Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.” He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.” Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

Here ends the first reading.

### **PSALM 23**

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.

## **SECOND READING**

Ephesians 5:8-14

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Here ends the second reading.

## **GOSPEL READING**

John 9:1-41

As he 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.

The Gospel of the Lord.

*Friends in Christ,  
Grace and peace to you in the  
name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

If I were to try to categorize today's sermon, I would probably call it more of a personal reflection on a truly amazing Gospel story ... the familiar story of a man who was born blind but gained his sight (as well as insight).

As I read and reread this story, I was tempted to take a number of side trips away from the main point since there are so many opportunities imbedded in today's Gospel story.

For instance, it certainly would be worth spending some of our time disproving the suggestion that the blind man's suffering was the result of either his own sin or the sin of his parents.

OR ... we certainly could pause for a while and bask in the wonder of Jesus' healing powers. OR ... we could consider the fear that gripped the blind man's parents when they were questioned about their son's miraculous healing. OR ... we could investigate the intricacies of the legal system regarding who was a credible witness and who wasn't.

In meandering through today's layered story, I even thought we could take a side trip to the pool of Siloam and wondered if that place held some special window or meaning into today's story. And yet, after thinking about all the opportunities that presented themselves in the story, I still found myself coming back to what seems to be the main points of the story: the experience of blindness, the giving of the miraculous gift of sight, and how those things parallel with the ideas of unbelief and belief.

You see, this story explores the question of how faith and understanding take root in us. I find myself wondering about the Pharisees ... those folks Jesus clearly points out are still blind at the end of the story. But you know, I don't like to admit that that's the case. I'd rather understand those Pharisees. At least if I understood them to be the ones who first weren't open to new ways of seeing things, maybe I'd understand how much you and I are like the Pharisees ... unable or unwilling to consider new ways of thinking or being or doing unless some major crisis forces us into doing so.

Several times throughout the week, a long-ago memory kept jumping into my mind. I was probably somewhere around six or seven and had begun the process of learning to read. It seemed as though a whole new world was opening up to me through reading, and I couldn't get enough of it. I started reading everything I could lay my hands on. I can remember

riding in the back of my father's car one day and looking out the window and seeing all kinds of written symbols (letters) on signs and buildings that were now beginning to mean something to me. I remember a large cinder block building with peeling white paint and the words "Body Shop" painted on the one side of the building.

As a little kid just getting the hang of reading, I knew no other "body" than the one I was walking around in. I can remember reading that sign for the first time and wondering what kind of "hospital" it was and knowing I certainly didn't what to go in that building if I got sick or needed medical attention.

Since I was just a little kid, I didn't understand the nuances of language. It never dawned on me that there might be other kinds of bodies, and I never thought to ask. Eventually, of course, I discovered that there were different kinds of "bodies" which, when broken or hurt, got put back together in different places ... in different ways. But, as I think about this now, I could have come to that deeper understanding a whole lot sooner if only I had asked someone. If only I had been a little more open to the truth that my first understanding might not be entirely complete or correct.

Of course, it probably isn't fair to compare a little kid's reasoning ability to that of the grown Pharisees, and it certainly wouldn't be fair to equate the ruthlessness of the Pharisees to the relative innocence of a little kid. Even so, it is possible, isn't it, that maybe the Pharisees we encounter now could have started out like me? After all, they see the world in one way and weren't open to other understandings. They had a sense of what healing was and where it came from, but they just couldn't figure out how it came from Jesus. More than that, they had no sense that there might be other kinds of healing needed ... even by themselves ... because they had no idea that they, in fact, were "blind" ... not entirely unlike a certain little kid just learning to read and bringing the only understanding she had to a complex world.

Maybe like me, and maybe like you, along with those Pharisees, we don't even recognize our own blindness ... and we don't recognize that we may just need something more.

And so, my prayer today, and most every day, is that you and I might overcome the Pharisee in us ... that we might be open to the surprise of what we don't yet know or even think we need to know.

And so I wonder as I live in this amazing story today:

- How much richer would our understanding be if we didn't always try to figure out why things happen ... especially the hard things ... but instead keep our eyes and ears and hearts open to how God is working in and through us?
- How much broader and deeper would our world be if, when we encounter healing, we approach it not with skepticism but with hope?
- How much surer would our faith be if we were only a little more open to the possibility that Jesus might be able to bring wholeness in places the world can't touch?
- And most of all, I wonder how much more might we be able to "see" if only we would acknowledge that often we can't see at all ... that we simply don't know ... just like we simple don't what's going to happen in our nation and world over the next several months?

Without a doubt, there's still a little of that little kid in all of us that makes us think we don't need to ask questions. But think about it ... if we never learned that there are different kinds of "hospitals" to heal different kinds of bodies (human, animal, automobile, tractors, boats, etc.), what would have become of us and all those other "bodies"? And if we had never learned there are different kinds of healing, just imagine how broken our world would still be.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, may we all know and recognize our own blindness so we might begin to see clearly.

So ... what do you think? Are there places in your life where, like the Pharisees, you're blind and don't even know it?

In this personal reflection, I have only explored one way of thinking about the meaning of today's Gospel story. Am I being blind? Would another understanding, another avenue, another entry point make more sense?

Only you can answer those questions from your own perspective.

And to that I say, "Let it be so. Amen."





## **SERMON HYMN**

*Note: If you have a hymnal or musical instrument at home, you may wish to sing one of your favorite hymns.*

## **APOSTLES' CREED**

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, 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 THE PEOPLE**

Lord God, we thank you for leading us, protecting us, encouraging us, being with us, restoring our sight, and turning our unbelief into belief no matter how underserving or stubborn we may be.

We pray for our world, broken by a vicious virus, that the light of Christ may give insight to world leaders, researchers, and doctors so the darkness of the unknown may end and all people may return to living normal lives filled with a new sense of peace and a greater understanding of cooperation.

We pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, its bishops, pastors, and lay leaders, that they, led by the Spirit, may lead your people to consider new ways of thinking, being, doing, understanding, and cooperating with each other.

We pray for those of all ages in all places, that they will be filled with the light of Christ and see clearly what is good and right and true ... willing to witness in word and deed that Christ does shine upon love us during both good and bad times.

We pray for all people throughout the world, that they may continue to grow in faith and experience God's love in many and various ways and will be inspired to reach out to others in support and love.

We pray for all who are trying to hold onto their faith in the midst of the current disaster that is impacting our normal way of living. Bring hope to all who are hospitalized or

quarantined, those who are grieving loss, and those who are seeking wisdom and strength, that they may know God's comfort during a time overshadowed by darkness.

We pray for medical professionals who are placing themselves in harm's way for the benefit of others; for those providing essential services; for those coordinating services in an effort to alleviate fear and anxiety; and all others who are on our hearts and minds. May the challenges they face bring them a new sense of strength and wholeness.

We give thanks for all those who have served you in astonishing ways. May your gift of eternal life provide all of us with hope for the future.

We pray in the name of our precious Lord and Savior. Amen.

### † **THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD** †

Praise and thanks to you, holy God, for by your Word you made all things: you spoke light into darkness, called forth beauty from chaos, and brought life into being. For your Word of life, O God, we give you thanks and praise.

By your Word you called your people Israel to tell of your wonderful gifts: freedom from captivity, water on the desert journey, a pathway home from exile, and wisdom for life. For your Word of life, O God, we give you thanks and praise.

Through Jesus, your Word made flesh, you speak to us and call us to witness by the power of forgiveness through the cross, life to those entombed by death, and the way of your self-giving love. For your Word of life, O God, we give you thanks and praise.

Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of a world in need. Faithful to your Word, O God, draw near to all who call on you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

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.

### † **THE SERVICE ENDING** †

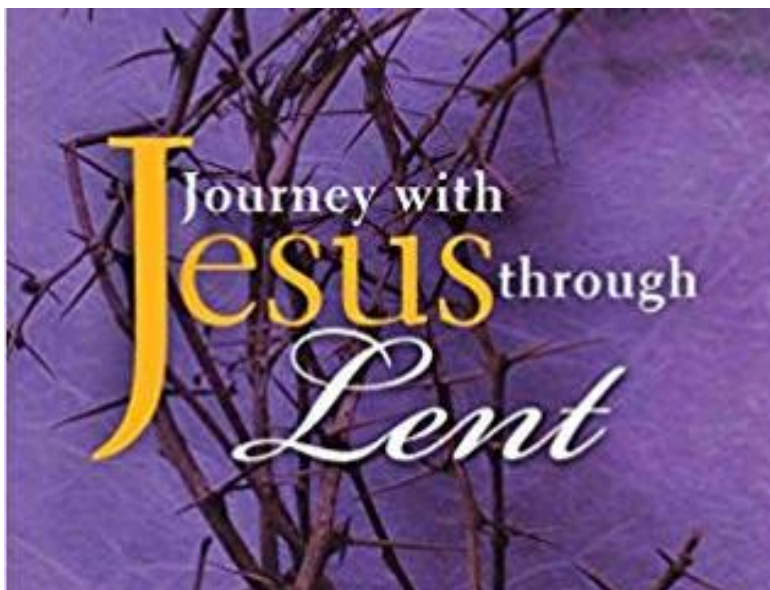
## **BLESSING**

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and † give you peace.

Amen.





## WALKING THE WAYS OF SORROW

March 25, 2020	Theme:	<b>Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother</b> (As told by Mary of Nazareth)
	Text:	Luke 2:33-35
April 1, 2020	Theme:	<b>Jesus is Nailed to the Cross</b> (As seen by the soldier on duty)
	Text:	Isaiah 6:10



April 5	<b>Palm Sunday Breakfast</b>	<b>9:15 a.m.</b>
	<b>Palm Sunday Services</b>	<b>8:00 &amp; 10:30 a.m.</b>
April 9	<b>Maundy Thursday</b>	<b>7:00 p.m.</b>
April 10	<b>Good Friday</b>	<b>7:00 p.m.</b>
April 12	<b>Easter Sunday</b>	<b>8:00 &amp; 10:30 a.m.</b>

*Christ is Risen; He is Risen Indeed!*



## *A brief message from Pastor Caruana ....*

Dear friends in Christ,

I hope this message finds all of you coping well with the stay-at-home restrictions that have been imposed for our benefit. It's truly amazing how much has happened in a short time and how all our lives have been affected.

Since I'm one who likes to be out and about, I'm beginning to feel a bit of cabin fever setting in, but most of all I'm concerned about when I can get my hair cut!! Really!!! 😊 (Thought I'd add that for humor, but I really do need a haircut. I'm beginning to look like a witch!! No comments, please!)

I've heard from many people in the congregation over the past week. One of the main things I'm hearing is how much people miss socializing with their church friends. Take this time to communicate with each other. Reach out via phone, text, email, or whatever media is most comfortable for you. It will be good for you and for those to whom you reach out.

Stay healthy. Stay Home. Relax. Wash your hands. Pray.

Remember Christ is with you through thick and thin.

† In peace and love ...

*Pastor Barb*