

Sermon by Reverend Maxine Cleghorn

Lent 4

1 Samuel 16:1-13, Ephesians 5:8-14, John 9:1-41

*There's a Miracle with Your Name on it!*

Whenever we are faced with a crisis, we are compelled to reflect on: our own mortality, the reason for which we were created, how well is wellness, what will God do for me today? How strong is my faith? In the face of the outbreak of COVID-19, we reflect on the place of our faith in a time of extreme crisis which has far-reaching effects. The gospel lesson for the fourth Sunday in Lent, Year A (John 9:1-41), focuses our attention on Jesus healing a man whose faith played an active role in his healing experience.

In the healing pericope from John, faith came face to face with opposition, but faith won. At the onset of the interactive faith experience, Jesus said, "He was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him." Note carefully that Jesus did not say that God inflicted blindness on the man. *Our situations can be a source through which God is glorified.* How God is glorified through our situations is another issue which begs our attention. One entertainer asked, "Why has the church gone into hiding when we need them the most? Where are the pastors who should come out and pray for the sick?" He even offered to pay any "pastor" who would lay hands on a person infected by the disease and heal that person. Might I say to him that God heals. Human beings are just vehicles/vessels through which God heals. I will leave the first part of his question for you to explore.

Before healing the man who was born blind, Jesus publicly declared an aspect of his soteriology (personhood), "I am the light of the world. This is both intent and purpose. In the man's culture, a person with any form of deformity incapacity was rendered unfit, imperfect and full of sin. In addition, blindness was considered a source of darkness for the whole body. Jesus intended to illumine that man's life. The purpose was to give him a place in society, where he is valued, rather than his present state of anomie. After his self-disclosure as "light of the world", Jesus made mud with his own saliva and put the mixture on the man's eyes. This healing action by Jesus was different from other approaches. Why did he make mud? Couldn't Jesus have said the word to heal the man? Or he could have said, "Go your way, your sins have made you well"?

Let us examine the word “saliva”. The word saliva comes from the root word salve from which we get salvation. Jesus saved the man in a demonstrative way in the presence of opposition. God can save you in any way he chooses to save you. Jesus bent down to prepare the mixture. Sometimes Jesus goes low to our level to dig up dirt in order to humble us. He sends us to get cleaned in the same way he told the man to go was in the pool of Siloam.

How can a blind man find his way? He did. Siloam means “Sent”. Isn’t this the meaning of the word apostle (apostle)? An apostle is one who is sent. Having gone and washed in the Pool of Siloam the man came back seeing. His eyes of faith led him to a place where he claimed his healing from Jesus. He just needed his physical eyes opened. So, when he was “sent”, his faith led him, carrying the gift of Jesus’ “salvation”, to encounter an outward and visible sign (water) of an inward and spiritual grace (cleansing and forgiveness).

Jesus had the man’s prescribed healing with his own name on it. By taking away his physical and spiritual darkness, Jesus gave the man a new Spirit and a new, Illuminated body.

You would have thought that people would be happy for the man’s new status. Jesus had made him open to endless possibilities, having brought him out of darkness into God’s own marvelous light. The antagonists were not happy for the man’s deliverance. They questioned his former disability. They questioned his healing and the authenticity of Jesus, the healer and Savior. The world is on edge and we are imprisoned by fear, sickness, and grief, caused by death from the disease. We have many questions, but we must trust God. When this is over; when millions are healed, we don’t want to hear “Where is the Church? Where is God?” God is always with us even in the face of suffering. That is what theodicy means. Therefore, we are, and will be praising God for bringing us over this life-altering threshold and for giving us a second chance to get it right, in many ways. Our faith is now face to face with opposition. This COVID-19 is hitting hard at the fabric and structure of society, the church, family dynamics, and all institutions. Its playing with our emotions, our plans.....everything. Why? “Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind.” Let us be on the positive end of this reversal of roles. May our eyes of faith remain open. Be like the man born blind and hold on to your faith because like that man, once we were blind but now we can see. God has a miracle with your name on it! Claim it now!