

SmithfieldCarman United Church
March 22

Welcome on our journey to Lent. Our world and our lives have taken on a new direction as we deal with the current health crisis. May God travel with all of us.

Opening Prayer:

On this Fourth Sunday of Lent,

we come seeking God,

In this time of uncertainty

in our lives and our world,

we come seeking god.

Quieting our minds, opening our hearts,

and waiting for the divine mystery

to make itself known,

we come to worship God.

Lenten Reflections: Lent 4 Psalm 107 Page 831 part 1

O give thanks, for God is gracious;

God's steadfast love endures for ever.

Let the redeemed of God say so, those redeemed from trouble,

whom God gathered in from the lands,

from the east and the west,

from the north and the south.

Some lost their way in desert wastes, finding no place to settle;

hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.

Then they cried to you, God, in their trouble;

you rescued them from their distress.

You led them by a straight path,

till they reached a place to settle.

Let them thank you, O God, for your steadfast love,

for the wonders you do for us.

For you satisfy the thirsty,

and fill the hungry with good things.

Those who go down to the sea in ships,

those who ply their trade on great waters,

they have seen your works, O God,

and the wonders you do in the deep.

At your command the stormy wind arose,

and lifted up the waves.

Carried up to the sky, and down to the depths,

their courage melted in the face of danger;
reeling and staggering as if drunken,

their seafaring skill was to no avail.

Then they cried to you, God, in their trouble;
you rescued them from their distress.

You made the storm be still; you hushed the roaring waves.

They rejoiced with the calm;

**you brought them to the harbour
for which they had longed.**

Let them thank you, God, for your steadfast love,
for the wonders that you do for us.

**Let them extol you when the people gather,
and praise you when the elders take counsel.**

Message: John 9: 1 – 41 *Jesus heals a blind Man*

As Jesus encounters this blind man he responds naturally. He sees the man, doesn't ignore him; doesn't express any reluctance to engage him; doesn't talk more loudly or more slowly because the man can't see; he speaks with him person to person; touches him and heals him

Jesus puts mud on his eyes and then disappears, saying: "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam," The man never even sees Jesus' face.

The blind man realizes something powerful has happened, yet does not have a clue how, how he got chosen, or who this man really was.

Yet he does not **know** what to believe about what has happened – just that it has happened. and while others want to **know** whether it is right or wrong, he says to the crowd that "this is an astonishing thing, "You do not **know** where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing"

The word **know** is used frequently giving us an idea as to how this man is growing in knowledge and spiritual insight of Jesus.

Immediately after his physical healing, the man identifies Jesus only as "the man they call Jesus"

After being questioned by his neighbors and by the Pharisees, the man identifies – or sees Jesus as "a prophet"

After the Pharisees, talk with his parents and question him a second time, the man acknowledges that Jesus is from God.

Finally after being expelled from the synagogue, and after Jesus himself searches him out again, the formerly blind man can say, "Lord, I believe"

He finally sees that Jesus is not just another man, not just someone that “they “ call Jesus. He now worship him as Jesus, the Lord of Life. It is almost as if his vision is improving, so he sees more clearly who has given him his sight.

Those in this story ask Is he from God? For the man who received his sight and for every other person in this story, the real issue is how they “see” Jesus. Perhaps that might be an issue for us today – whatever our physical ability to see or not see, this story confronts us with the question:

“How do we **see Jesus?**”

- with honesty, curiosity, and increasing knowledge like the man born blind?
- with fear like his parents?
- with anger and threats like some of the religious leaders?
- with risk-taking like the man born blind?

This healing of the blind man shows us that we too receive sight gradually. Not from our own resources but from the one who is the light of the world. Confessing that he does know the answers to all of the questions posed to him, he states, ‘One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.’ His experience of receiving sight is an important foundation for his spiritual formation, yet acknowledges that there are some things he just doesn’t know. He knows that he sees but he can’t answer every question about Jesus, yet to not understand fully is to truly understand who Jesus is.

When disciples are called to follow Jesus, they leave and believe in him though they don’t see or know the way he is going. They travel in the dark with his presence lighting the way. They don’t see everything. We don’t see everything. Jesus sees us physically and spiritually, where we need healing and where we have already begun to grow and change.

How do you see Jesus? Amen

Benediction

May God, who comes to us in the things of this world,
bless your eyes and be in your seeing.

May Christ, who looks upon you
with deepest love, bless your eyes
and widen your gaze.

May the Spirit, who perceives what is
and what may yet be, bless your eyes
and sharpen your vision.

May the Sacred Three
bless your eyes
and cause you to see.