



Lent

OUR SAVIOR
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Fourth Sunday in Lent
Sunday, March 22, 2020



OUR SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH
745 Front Street S., Issaquah, WA 98027
425-392-4169

SERVICE OF THE WORD

GATHERING: THE HOLY SPIRIT CALLS US TOGETHER AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

GREETING

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

C: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

PM: Let us pray. Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ,

C: and come among us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

WORD: GOD SPEAKS TO US IN SCRIPTURE READING, PREACHING AND SONG.

READING

1 Samuel 16:1-13

¹The 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." ²Samuel 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.'" ³Invite 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." ⁴Samuel 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?" ⁵He 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.

⁶When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord." ⁷But 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." ⁸Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." ⁹Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." ¹⁰Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." ¹¹Samuel 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." ¹²He 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." ¹³Then 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.

AM: Word of God, word of life. **C: Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 23

AM: ¹The Lord ¹is my shepherd;

C: I shall not ¹be in want.

AM: ²The Lord makes me lie down ¹in green pastures

C: and leads me be- ¹side still waters.

AM: ³You restore my ¹soul, O Lord,

C: and guide me along right pathways ¹for your name's sake.

AM: ⁴Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall ¹fear no evil;

C: for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they ¹comfort me.

AM: ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence ¹of my enemies;

C: you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is ¹running over.

AM: ⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days ¹of my life,

C: and I will dwell in the house of the ¹Lord forever.

THE GOSPEL & SERMON

Before I was Blind, Now I Can See!

John 9:1-41

Pastor Jim Kruse

The Gospel reading for today is the entire 9th Chapter of the Gospel of John. That may sound like a lot to take in all at once. However, it is really a short drama with six distinct scenes, with lots of characters moving in and out of the picture. So, if we break it down into these scenes, it becomes easier to follow and maybe even to understand.

The setting of this drama is the hustle and bustle of Jerusalem, where Jesus is moving about being followed by his disciples. In the opening scene, Jesus happens upon a beggar who was born blind, and Jesus heals his eyesight. In Scenes 2, 3, 4, and 5, the man is questioned as to how he has gained the ability to see. And then, in the 6th and final scene, Jesus returns to make everything clear. . . well, sort of. You'll see!

Before you enter into this story with me, I encourage you to try to understand the context. And the context is this: We have a God who is pretty good at doing nothing for long periods of time. For the man born into blindness, the "silence of God" has lasted all of his life. This lesson does not deal with any of this man's patience or his pain, only with the confusion that occurs after God has acted in his life.

We have all had our moments of quiet desperation, waiting and watching, hoping and praying, for God to break into our lives and help us deal with some overwhelming trouble or sorrow. And we all know that these can be dark and painful times.

So, if you are experiencing a time like this in your life right now, If you are experiencing the "silence of God," you may not be able to relate to all of the talk in this story about the "action of God." But also be assured that most of us have been where you are today, and where a man blind from birth had spent most of his life, praying into the "silence of God." It is my hope, as well as the hope of this short drama, to give you hope, that the promise of God to act on behalf those who are suffering is meant for you also.

So, our story begins with Scene One:

"Jesus heals a man, blind from birth." (v. 1-7)

As he walked along, (Jesus) 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.

Here in the Northwest, we live in an area of tremendous beauty. The mountains and trees and oceans and lakes seem to be a permanent, timeless testimony to the creative power of a loving and caring God. And so we can forget that our corner of the world can also a place of earthquakes and volcanoes, forest fires and heavy flooding. And now, we live at the center of a nation-wide outbreak of an unprecedented health crisis. In a split-second, lives have been turned upside down, changed forever.

The story of the healing of a man born blind is also a story of a life turned upside down. In this case, it is not the destructive power of nature brining him down, but the healing power of God lifting him up. He may not be happy with his life, but after a lifetime of practice, he has learned to accept and live with his blindness. Begging for coins on the street corner may not be the best way to get through life, but at least it is known. He knows how to get by.

This may be a hard life that all of us are asked to get through, but after a lifetime of practice, we have learned how to settle in and accept it for what it is. We have learned how to get by.

But then something happens. One day the solid ground underneath us begins to move and things are not as clear as they used to be. And everything is different. One day your spouse looks at you like he or she has never looked at you before and you know, at that moment, that they are with you, not against you, and you will never have to be alone. And everything is different. One day your child stops brooding, or fighting, or running wild, and begins to take an interest in things, and you know, at that moment, that you can stop worrying, they are going to be OK. And everything is different. One day the ache doesn't ache like you thought it was going to ache for the rest of your life, and you know you are going to live through the loss of someone you dearly loved. You're going to be OK and everything is different.

But that's not the end; it's only the beginning.

The story continues with Scene Two:

"The Neighbors don't know what's gotten into him." (v. 8-12)

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."

Early in my ministry in Wisconsin, I made friends with a woman who, at the age of 48, decided that she wanted to become a pastor. Just like that. It was her third career. Her first career was to be a mother and business administrator. And she spent a decade or so at it.

And then in her mid-thirties she moved to the country and became a dairy farmer. And then in her late forties she became a pastor, and she was pretty good at it. She talked about how all of these changes affected her relationships. Her husband learned to adjust his life to hers, but her children never quite understood. And she lost touch with many of her friends along the way.

When we have been touched by God, when we have been changed at the very core of our being, we can become people that our friends and neighbors do not recognize. Sometimes we don't even recognize ourselves. And when we are asked, all we can do is scratch our heads and say, "Well I did this and then I did that and then I went here and then I went there." But we really don't know what has gotten into us. We just know we have changed.

So we go to Scene Three:

"Call in the experts. He doesn't know." (v.13-17)

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."

This is a typical response by the experts to a tough question. Some go one way, and some go another. And then when there is disagreement, they try to settle things with a little research. At first, it is a great honor for this insignificant, blind, beggar to be asked to comment on an important theological dividing point between the Pharisees. He does not really know what is going on. Yet, impressed by his sense of importance, the man blurts it out, "Why he must be a prophet. Sure, that's it, he's a prophet."

It's not easy to recognize the hand of God working in our lives in a world that is filled with people who seem to know more about it than we do. You may think that that baby sleeping quietly over there in the corner is a miracle from God. But the experts don't. It is just a biological, social occurrence. It happens everyday. No miracle there. And you may think that the new job you just got that has lifted you out of the deep and made you see your future in a brighter way is a miracle from God. But the experts don't. You were just in the right place at the right time. That is how the system works.

According to the experts of this world, we can't possibly be so blessed as we say we are.

So the experts do some more research in Scene Four:

"Let's go ask Mom and Dad" (v.18-23)

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 him-

self.” 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.”

Faced with the confusion that often comes with spiritual growth, it is tempting to fall back on what is familiar. The spiritual business of children is to learn what is right and wrong, what is good and bad. That’s what children are supposed to do. And the spiritual business of young adults and teens is to learn who they are over and against who their parents and friends are. That is what they are supposed to do. But the spiritual business of adults is quite different. Their business is to learn whose they are--whom can they trust, on whom can they depend when life and experience fails them. If we fall back on our moral God at times like this, the God of right and wrong, good and bad, we end up like the Pharisees did when they said, “He healed on the Sabbath, he can’t be from God.” And we miss the point. Likewise if we fall back on the God of our parents and friends, the God who tells us who we are, we end up like the former blind man’s parents, afraid of being put out of their synagogue. And again we miss the point.

We do best to hang on to what we already know as we struggle to learn who the healer in our life is. We already pretty much know what is right and wrong. We have already done that work. And we already pretty much know who we are. We have already done that work too. But we do not always know whose we are, at least not yet. The conclusion of the story will help clarify the answer.

Which brings us to Scene Five:

(This is the comedy scene. If you watch carefully you will see that the man becomes clear about whose he is, and with humor shows the experts how lost they really are.)

“Back to the Source--the Man formerly blind” (v. 24-34)

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 sin, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out.

Living into the gracious activity of God is not easy work. Most of the time we are struggling to live between the fear and confusion expressed by the parents in this story as they cling to what they think is secure; and the self-confident humor of the blind man as he is being tossed out of his place of worship. How do we know what’s happening? How did the blind man know? Who is this traveler who quietly walks out of the vast silent darkness of God, touches our hurts, and walks away, leaving it to us to figure out what happened? Who is

this 1st century healer of blind men who got himself nailed to a cross before his friends could figure out what had happened? Who is this mysterious figure who offers us on this day his body to eat and his blood to drink in bread and wine for our healing? If we are honest we must say, “Who knows?” I don’t know where he comes from. I don’t know if he is a sinner or a saint. And I don’t know how he does it. But I do know that before I was blind and now I can see. Before I was dead and now I am alive. Before I was in deep pain, and now I no longer hurt.

And so, for those of us who are living our lives receiving nothing but the “silence of God” for our prayers; this much we can know for sure. That a man who was born into utter sin and darkness, one day fell down to worship the Christ of God, and that is enough. Enough for now. Enough to see us through.

And now the conclusion—Scene Six:“

“Jesus returns” (v. 35-41)

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.

PM: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

+Turning our hearts to God who is gracious and merciful, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

[A brief silence.]

As we journey through this holy season of Lent:

+ Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbors. Call forth our prayers and acts of kindness, and strengthen us to face our mortality with confidence in the mercy of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us find ways to be connected to you and to our neighbors in these days of physical isolation and anxiety. Enliven our faith to know that the Kingdom of God is indeed among us

Loving God, we remember that you are our source of life and hope.

+ We give thanks for your gifts of love and life; inspire us to be your hands and voice in your world; grant us courage and creativity to joyfully share your Good News.

We pray for our world, nation, and local communities.

+ We lift up those communities where insecurity, violence, and fear are the norm. Help us to bring healing, wholeness, and safety to these siblings.

We pray for all who are in need of healing and strength:

+ We hold in prayer Karen, Sabin, Amy, Lysle, Marilyn, Lil, Dave, Pat, David, Jean, guests of the Community Meals Program, Elija, Halle, Sonja, Nicole, Josee and Jeannie.

- + We lift up those experiencing anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges.
- + God, you call us to care for our neighbors. Inspire our leaders and guide us to be better advocates for the sake of each member in our community - especially those who have little power and no voice.

We pray hold in prayer those affected by the COVID-19 virus.

- + Bring peace and comfort to the families of those who have died.
 - + Grant healing for those diagnosed.
 - + Keep safe those whose health conditions make them especially vulnerable to this virus.
- We lift up those
- + Protect medical workers, care providers, and first responders.
 - + Sustain chaplains who bring prayer and care to those hospitalized or isolated in nursing homes.
 - + Guide those working to improve testing and those working toward a vaccine and for our government and health organization leaders as they discern a path forward.
 - + Sustain for those who are facing financial uncertainty due to loss of income. Help us to share generously.
 - + Watch over those who are away from home and/or traveling home including our college students and our YAGM volunteers.
 - + Bless our ministry leaders as they explore care-filled and creative ways to gather online for worship, prayer, and fellowship. We give thanks for the grace-filled support our leaders have shown one another.
 - + For all who are anxious and worried, ground us in facts and center us in your love and peace.
 - + During these days of physical isolation, grant us patience, humor, compassion, and courage.

We pray for those who are grieving:

- + Loving God, wrap your arms of love and hope around all who are experiencing any kind of loss, disconnection, or brokenness.
- + We give thanks for the medical services by Augusta Victoria Hospital, Jerusalem, for Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

For what and for whom else do the people of God pray this morning?

[Here other intercessions may be offered.]

C: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Sustain us in our journey:

- + Blessed are you, O God of the universe. Your mercy is everlasting and your faithfulness endures from age to age.

C: Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PM: Let us pray together:

C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

SENDING: GOD BLESSES US AND SENDS US INTO THE WORLD.

BENEDICTION

PM: God the Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth and forevermore.

C: Amen

Emergency Pastoral Care

For emergency pastoral care, please contact
OSLC Transition Pastor Jim Kruse at
206-919-9520 (mobile) or JamesKruse814@gmail.com.

Keep up with our Lenten willow branch!

It continues to grow in our sanctuary.
We'll try to provide a new photo of it each week.



Willow Cross in a Circular Bowl uses a time-honored art form to convey that our universe is rooted in Christ, who brings us into new life through his death and resurrection.

Readings for next week: Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130; John 11:1-45

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Our Savior Lutheran Church Staff

Rev. James R. Kruse, *Transition Pastor*
Shari Lundberg, *Parish Administrator*
Dr. Jiyoung Lee, *Parish Organist*

Scott Hafso, *Director of Worship & Music*
Kate Gagnon, *Lay Visitation Minister*

Prayer is putting our faith into action. We invite you to include these people in your daily prayers. You can make prayer requests via Connection Cards in the pews, or email office@oslcissaquah.org. All written requests will remain on this list for 4 weeks.

Karen Gerde blessings and love on her wedding day in Eastern Washington this weekend. (Patty Gerde)

Sabin Thibodeaux a youth hit by a car and now in ICU. Strength, healing and comfort. (Bill Cash)

Amy Jackson healing for a broken shoulder. (Lyle & Alice Lewis)

Lyle Bentley recovering from brain surgery. (Don Robertson)

Marilyn Grey as she transitions to assisted living. (mother of Mark Cron)

Lil healing, discernment for her doctors. (Cheryl Neeb)

Dave Carlson a kidney donor will be found quickly.

Pat undergoing heart valve replacement. (Cheryl Neeb)

David Woods strength and comfort following a kidney cancer diagnosis. (Lyle & Alice Lewis)

Jean Stanley healing for a broken pelvis and adjustments in her life (sister-in-law of Lyle & Alice Lewis)

Guests of the Community Meals Program safety, health and peace of mind. (Connie Fletcher)

Elija Del Rio 4 month old recover from open heart surgery. (Shelley Howe)

For all affected by the coronavirus: healing, comfort, wisdom and peace. (Karen Hansen)

Sonja 3 years old undergoing treatment for cancer. [daughter of Josh & Rachael, granddaughter of Henrik & Patty Christopherson] (Dianne Tanner)

Nicole DeCamp healing and strength. (Ken DeCamp and Cheryl Leiter)

Josee Jordan peace of mind as she faces new health challenges. (Dianne Tanner)

Jeannie Lindquist continued healing and strength.

Healing and peace of mind: **Marian James;** **Douglas Mandt** (brother of Mary Ann Hult and Lorna Robertson); **Gregory** (nephew of Joanne Suttmeier); **Doug Patur;** **Katie Moeller;** **Margot Inman;** **Ken Acker** (son of Lucy Acker); **Marilyn Carlson;** **Taufik Hidayut** (Ken Konigsmark); **Don Wilkinson** (husband of Gwynn Wilkinson); **Rebecca Thomas** (Pr. Telyea); **Tanisha Foote** (Marilyn Carlson); **Dorothy Soland;** **Randi Strom;** **Jeanne Kuipers;** **Talton Johnson;** **John Pass;** **Florence Kinnune;** **Carol Harbolt;** **Sandy Aldworth;** **Jen Winslow** (Wendy

Winslow); **Larry Pruitt.**

Undergoing cancer treatment: **Amy Aldworth** (daughter-in-law of Sandy Aldworth) **Les Carlson** (father of Dave Carlson); **Harold Mandt** (brother of Mary Ann Hult and Lorna Robertson); **Chris Howe** (brother of Mark Howe); **Peggy Scalise** (cousin of Mark Howe); **Eileen Letts** (cousin of Mark Howe); **Floyd Rogers** (Connie Fletcher); **Lori Anglin** (Janet Heck); **Keith DeCamp** (brother of Ken DeCamp); **Barbara Jones** (mother of Ron Sordahl); **Doug McVety** (Helen Nychay); **Al Batt** (Connie Fletcher); **Larry Harbolt** (Ray Harbolt); **Gerald Welch** (Vern and Jeannie Lindquist); **Joe Martin** (father of Stacy Smith); **Jerry Duffee** (brother-in-law of Connie Fletcher); **Christy Williams** (Bill Bergsma); **Diane Powis** (Paul Tolo); **Dana Mancini** (Jan Setterlund); **Greg Petersen** (Wes Collum); **Tim Teodoro** (Janet Heck); **Barry Donker** (Joan Parish); **Germaine Korum** (Lyle and Alice Lewis); **Kathryn Aitcheson** (Gerrie Hendrickson); **Yuko Takiguchi** (Teiko Soland); **Barb** (Janette Singley)

Living with cancer: **Liz Kidd** (Bob Beck); **Duane Jacobson;** **Mary Lewis** (sister-in-law of Lyle and Alice Lewis); **Mark Becker** (uncle of Paula Seeger); **Barbara Krogh Jarvis** (sister of Steve Krogh); **Suzanne Lewis** (daughter-in-law of Lyle & Alice Lewis); **Mira Bergsma**

Expectant Mothers: **Jessica Murguia** (Cheryl Hauser); **Emily Wilson** (daughter of Ann & Larry Thomas) **Keeley Hanson** (Cheryl Leiter); **Yili Leiter** (Cheryl Leiter); **Elsa Walker** (daughter of Chuck Bachman & Wendy Winslow)

Mourning the death of loved ones: For peace and comfort during this time of grieving for the family and friends of: **Gustavo Hernandez** (Karen Hansen); **Jerry Duffee** (Connie Fletcher)

Members and friends serving in the military; Fire, Police and Emergency Room personnel.

Global Missions and Missionaries: For Lutheran World Relief, bringing health and healing to displaced Syrians and Syrian refugees. (Global Missions). **Henrik & Patty Christopherson.** Congregations in Chiclayo, Peru: **Pepe** at Las Brisas, **Merci** in San Antonio and **Harold** at Las Lomas. **MaaSae Girls Lutheran Secondary School** in Tanzania.

