

March 22nd

Dear Friends,

On the Fourth Sunday of Lent the lessons designated for March 22, 2020 are:

Psalm 23, 1 Samuel 16:1-13, Ephesians 5: 8-14, and John 9: 1-41.

Sometimes it is difficult for us to see the miracles that are in front of us.

Most of us have grown up in a society that trains us to make quick evaluations. Evaluate products quickly. Evaluate situations quickly. Evaluate people quickly.

This is a skill that benefits us as humans and helps us each to survive to live longer and grow older.

We are taught to search for the strongest and smartest people. We are taught to investigate situations to understand why something happened. We are encouraged to find the people, places, and things that help us to become more efficient, more successful, faster, and stronger.

This is also a skill that sometimes blinds us.

Prayer O God, the author and source of all light, you gaze into the depths of our inmost hearts. Never permit the powers of darkness to hold your people captive, but open our eyes by the grace of your Spirit, that we may be able to look on your Son and see the One you sent to illumine the world, so that, seeing we may believe and worship Jesus as Lord. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen. *From Prayers for Sunday and Seasons, Year A, Peter J. Scagnelli, LTP, 1992.*

Love and Prayers, Beverly+

LENT PATHWAYS -

I WAS BLIND, BUT NOW I SEE

This week we see Samuel the prophet receiving instruction from God to stop spending time worrying about Saul and to go find the next King of Israel. Samuel had a list of reasons this would not be smart, but eventually he begins his mission. He goes out to meet Jesse and Jesse's plethora of sons. One by one, Samuel looked at the young man in front of him, saw the smartest and strongest and fastest and most successful...and one by one God told him to keep looking. Samuel was caught **in the habit of only seeing with his eyes.**

In a Psalm that was likely written by David, we see the words of a man who had been through so much he was obviously no longer only looking at the things he could see with his eyes. This Psalm is often thought of as one of the greatest faithful examples we have in scripture. **Faith that believes in things that cannot be seen.**

In Paul's letter to the followers of Jesus in Ephesus he takes a slightly more ethereal approach to thinking about being able to see. He is encouraging his readers to understand that before they were followers of Jesus, **they "were" darkness and now in the Lord they are "light."** And since they are now children of light, they should shine their light and awake those that are in darkness.

And finally, in John's gospel, we read about people failing to see a **miracle of sight** restored as they are busy looking for something else. Here, Jesus heals a man blind since birth. It would have been a common understanding that this man's blindness was punishment for the sins of his parents.

In an extraordinary story, Jesus takes on the question, who sinned? Was the blind man born blind because of his own sin or his parents? But Jesus doesn't want to talk about why. **What's**

important to know is that “the works of God” are to become manifest to all. And not only publicly manifest, in the case of the man himself, they will be experienced.

The church is struggling because her congregations cannot gather. And I confess exploring new platforms, worrying about the consequences of this closure, and creating new media links is quite intense. Yet, **Christian faith is well suited to bear witness to “the works of God” in dismal circumstances”. And those “works” aren’t always about healing and happiness.** United to an incarnate and suffering God, we’re essentially engineered to do that.

I am finding my way through this wilderness considering what the church is doing here in the first place. And I have learned very quickly that “the works of God” abound through those who have offered to answer a call to ministry during this surreal time. Light in the darkness.

You should know that members of the parish are stepping up to bear witness to the love of Christ through prayer, volunteering to help should any member need something, to call all those who may need connections and care, and to assist me in the work of online spiritual enrichment. Let us keep our prayers steadfast and look for the “works of God” before our very eyes.

We are in nearly a “shelter in place” situation. But, while we may find ourselves helpless to stop the hardship or be personal agents of healing, we can simply bear witness. Like the man in John 9, we can refuse to stop embodying confidently what we believe to be true. Remember the “works of God” that gave a blind man his sight and look for “the works of God” in your own life.

“Let us go forth, in the name of Christ.”

Faithfully, Beverly