



Sermon for Sunday Laetare 2017 (Proper Lent 4A)

Jesus heals the blind!



Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

St. John's Lutheran Parish
Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in John 9, 34-41:

• ^{ESV 34} They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?"
And they cast him out.

• ³⁵ Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

• ³⁶ He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"

• ³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have seen Him, and it is He who is speaking to you."

• ³⁸ He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped Him.

• ³⁹ Jesus said, "For judgement I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."

• ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to Him, "Are we also blind?"

• ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

• Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and give us a new heart which will hear what you say to us and see You. Amen.*

• **Dear Beloved of the Father!**

• Jesus had a serious dispute with the scribes and Pharisees in the temple, about the fact that they don't know the heavenly Father. They thought they knew Him, but by interpreting the Law of God in such a manner that it never accused themselves and by rejecting the Word of Jesus they were exposed that they didn't know God's Will and what God the Father was doing in Christ Jesus!

• It was a serious escalating dispute in which Jesus revealed to them that they had Satan as their father, because they wanted to kill Him. Not long after this they actually took some stones and wanted to kill Him there and then, but Jesus evaded them.

• It is after this drastic conflict that Jesus walked past the man born blind. His disciples asked Him about the origin of this man's suffering: Did he sin or his parents? That was the standard religious assumption: If one was handicapped

right since birth, it must have been a serious punishment by God for a horrific sin. Otherwise, why the severe punishment?

• Now, to be born blind meant, no healing- that was a serious suffering inflicted on the person. Being blind means, you are always dependent on others. Its very difficult to do things on your own and of course you couldn't see what others were seeing. It was seen as huge punishment.

• Our old self tends to think likewise. It quickly equates affliction of others with punishment by God. For instance, children with serious special needs are sometimes believed to be possessed by a demon. The suffering of the righteous remains a difficult thing to grasp, also for us Christians.

• Jesus gives an answer which once again, gives light into darkness: *"It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."* This is a new answer to the question, why suffering? And it points to the future, rather than the past: That the works of God may be revealed in him, through him. What works of God does Jesus speak of here?

• First Jesus healed the man's physical eyesight and then later on He came back to the man to open his understanding to see Jesus as the Son of Man, the anointed Messiah of God who came to judge the world, so that all the blind will receive insight and all who claim to be seeing, that they become blind. In both body and soul Jesus healed this man.

• What did Jesus use? This is often referred to, so it is important to get it. Jesus used physical means, His saliva and sand mixed into mudpasta, means of the first Creation, and smeared it onto the man's eyes. He then had to go and wash himself in the pool of Siloam. Water also! Afterwards he could see!

• Yet, after his eyes were opened, his real problems began. That is when he was questioned and scrutinised as to how he got helped. He was taken to the Pharisees, the self-acclaimed experts to determine if this could have been a work of God. According to the Pharisees it couldn't have been a work of God, because Jesus had violated the Sabbath day. He helped someone on the Sabbath day. He worked by making mud and smearing it on his eyes.

- But the healed man stuck to confess that it was Jesus who healed him. He spoke of himself as being Jesus' disciple. For this steadfastness, he was excommunicated from the synagogue. His parents were afraid to confess that it was indeed God's work which Christ did. They remained in the synagogue. But the healed man was kicked out of the synagogue.
- Forsaken by his own kinsmen, but not forsaken by Jesus! Jesus came to him and asked him for a formal confession towards Himself. The man asked Jesus, who the Son of Man is that he may believe in him. That is when Jesus introduced Himself to him and said, that the one speaking to him is the Son of Man.
- Then the man confessed, I believe, LORD. And he fell onto his knees and worshipped Jesus- which clearly shows that Jesus is true God. No one is allowed to worship anyone except the living true God!
- The thing that was so offensive to the Pharisees was the fact, that this man received the Grace of God without himself asking, without repentance- Jesus saw the man and acted on him. The man didn't even know Him, yet Jesus did the work of God on him. The work He was sent to do, namely to take away the sins of the world. He was sent to open peoples eyes and hearts for the work of God!
- But, we also learn that on the other hand He was also sent to make blind those who were not blind. Those who interpret everything according to the Law of God- when you are blessed you are good and when you suffer there is no hope for you - and reject God's work of undeserved Grace, those need to realise that they are in fact blind! They don't understand God's Work of Grace. Here Jesus was handing out God's grace before any repentance, before confession of faith, and revealed just how merciful He truly is. He reveals without any reservation that He came to handout the gift of God!
- This doesn't mean that once you have received the Grace of God, that you will have an easy time in this world, in your community. Not necessarily. You will be questioned. Many sceptics will reject your healing of sin and death in Baptism, especially children's Baptism. Nevertheless, Jesus wants your confession towards Himself, and in this world. He asks you for it.

- Furthermore, we may also learn, He doesn't drop us. If He asks of us to confess Him before the nations, in our community, He assures us that He comes to us and enlightens us and sheds more light on who He is and what great work He is doing in the world. And you and I, we are so privileged that we may participate in the work He is doing in this world.
- He has done a mighty work on each one of us, when He baptised us and preached His Gospel to us, when we received the forgiveness of sins, which He turned into eternal Life. Every Sunday, the Work of God is done on us, the old Adam is judged and washed away and we receive new life from God. If our eyes were losing sight of God's work in the world, here, through His Word and other means of Grace, our faith-eyesight is restored.
- Therefore, let us not hide away, let us not close our hearts and doors for the community, but rather let us openly confess whose disciples we are. Let us not be hampered in doing the Work of God, just because the politicians turn against Christians. Let us not get discouraged, because huge numbers are not storming our doors. It is sheer grace that Jesus wants to use us to reveal the Work of God in this world. This you can all do in your vocations, and if you do it already, be encouraged to continue to do so, wherever you work, and as a congregation.
- We may draw great comfort from the fact, that even in our sufferings and afflictions and, yes, even if we, just like the man, should get sidelined by society because we confess the true Grace of God, we may reckon with Jesus enlightening us. When we see more of who He really is, and how close He is to us and we get to see more of the bigger picture of what happens beyond what our physical eyes can see, we are comforted so much that we will even be able to rejoice with the Apostles in our sufferings and afflictions.
- Therefore, we ask, dear Lord open our eyes of faith so that we will see You and Your work, on us and in our community. Thank you dearest Jesus. **Amen.**
- *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **Amen.** [Phil 4,7].*