

Pastor A. David Anglada's Sermon Outline
March 22, 2020, Fourth Sunday in Lent
"Jesus Is Liberating" St. John Chapter 9 verses 1-41

9 As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, ⁷saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. ⁸The 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?" ⁹Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." ¹⁰But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" ¹¹He 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." ¹²They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵Then 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." ¹⁶Some 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. ¹⁷So 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." ¹⁸The 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 ¹⁹and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" ²⁰His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹but 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 himself." ²²His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus^{is} to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."²⁴So 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." ²⁵He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." ²⁶They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷He 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?" ²⁸Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his

disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” ³⁰The man answered, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” ³⁴They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out.³⁵ Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶He answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” ³⁷Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” ³⁸He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him. ³⁹Jesus 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.” ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not blind, are we?” ⁴¹Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains (New Revised Standard Version).

Grace and Peace from our Blessed Lord Jesus, let us pray:

Open our mind’s eye, Holy One. Prepare our hearts to receive your call in our lives, through the word we hear proclaimed this morning. Wake us to your truths. Use your word to set us along the right path this day. May the meditations of our hearts be pleasing and acceptable to you o God.

Thank you for joining us this morning, the fourth Sunday in Lent. Today’s Message theme is “Jesus is liberating.”

Today’s gospel reading the ninth chapter of John’s starting in verse 1 and ending at verse 41. John, the Gospel writer, tells us that an unnamed man blind from birth encounters Jesus.

Unlike the other stories throughout the Gospel of John, does not begin with the blind man crying to Jesus for mercy, or with people bringing a blind man to Jesus. Nor is he led by his friends to Jesus.

Instead, this story begins with a question.

Also, what I find so impressive in our Gospel narrative is that the blind man does not speak until he is healed, basically at the end of the story.

When Jesus sees a man blind from birth, the disciples ask, Rabbi-teacher, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind.

The disciples' question is rooted in an ancient, cultural-religious understanding that the sins of parents are visited on their children.

Most likely the disciples were referring to the Hebrew scriptures which states that "I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me."

Likewise, in the Hebrew scriptures, when Job had been afflicted with a skin illness, many of his friends sought out to know if he or his ancestors had sinned.

By the way, this was the predominant view of the time: poverty and disease were punishment for sin.

Thanks be to God! that our Lord frees to the people that surround him from such a concept that ties up their hands and prevents them from facing reality: neither this man nor his parents are responsible for this nameless man's blindness.

When people blame God and others, who are ill or poor means pushing them deeper into their plight. Moreover, it prevents them from taking appropriate ways to get out of those horrific situations.

Many still believe that their suffering is a divine punishment from God. My good friends, we live in a broken world, the world is not perfect, the world is not immune from disease or the Coronavirus!

Yes, sin is a human reality that we live with, but we Christians believe in a God of Grace, a God eager to forgive us, as well as inviting us all to embrace eternal love and forgiveness.

Dear saints of God, **God is a God of love, not of punishment**, which may justify what God rejects: the inhuman conditions in which many people are living.

By liberating us from this narrow and self-serving religious interpretation, Jesus reveals to us the God of life, the God of liberation coupled with the God of love.

Back to our Gospel story, Jesus restores the sight of the blind man who used to sit to beg. To the liberation from a distorted religious, theological perspective, Jesus adds the elimination of blindness.

John gives us an interesting theological presentation in his gospel. The blind man is now healed; the religious leaders want to deny the blind man of his blessing by denying the event.

Afterward, the religious leaders go after Jesus for healing the blind man on the sabbath. They accused Jesus of violating the Holy Scriptures.

They are accusing Jesus of not coming from God and being a sinner.

Formerly blind man gives his testimony, here is what he says “a man called Jesus spat on the ground and made mud with his saliva and spread the mud on my eyes and ask me to go, wash in the pool of Siloam,” then I did as he had instructed me.

Afterward, I received my sights. For the first time I saw colors, I saw faces, and I was able to walk without my wooden cane (a White Cane).

I was in the dark, and now I can see myself.

“This is what I know; I was blind, now I see.”

The religious elite confronts the formerly blind man, furthermore they keep questioning him.

The healed man tells them, seeing you are so preoccupied with what has happened, he then asked them, “do you also want to become his disciple?”

At the end of our gospel story, the blind man sees and understands. Not only are his eyes open, but his heart opens to the truth about the one who gave him sight.

Ultimately, the man declares, “Lord, I believe,” moreover he worships Jesus. Conversely, the Pharisees question, “Surely, we are not blind, are we?” They are spiritually blind; they cannot see Christ as the light of the world.

The blind man and those around him are liberated from a theological idea of a punishing God. But a God of love and kindness.

This past week I heard a fundamentalist preacher saying, “that God was punishing the world with the Coronavirus because of our sinfulness and evilness.”

My dear sisters and brothers please, reject this bad theology, God loves us and wants to liberate us from sin; God wants us to embrace the light of Jesus in our heart.

Similar to this is another example, in 2010, when an earthquake devastated Haiti, several conservative evangelical preachers interpreted the earthquakes as a divine punishment for their practice of Voodoo, including other indigenous folkloric religion. Instead of seeing it as a natural disaster that affected thousands of people, especially the poor.

Dear people of God today, we are invited to embrace the liberating light of Christ in our lives. In the midst of our broken world, we are being asked to embrace the light of Christ

so that we, too, can see us as the blind man in our gospel story. Perhaps you are spiritually blind and cannot see how God is still active in our world today and wants us to save us from all forms of sin, which keeps us separated from God.

The healing liberating Jesus is here with us wanting to bring sight to our blindness.

Let us pray

In the light of God, all is made clear. We see how much God loves us and how much God loves all people. We see Christ, the Light of the World, in Scripture and our lives, and although we once were blind, now we see!

Benediction

Go into the world, carrying the light of Christ into the darkness!

We go, with hearts full and eyes open!

Receive God's love and care and share that love and care with others!

We go, with eyes reflecting God's light and hands open to share it!

May you walk in the light of Christ all the days of your life! **We will follow Christ wherever he leads us! Amen!**

Works Cited

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Lectionary commentary by Gustavo Gutiérrez

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Dr. Rev. Dr. Pablo Navarro Hernandez, conversation on human suffering, March 20, 2020.