

FREE CHURCH WEEKLY DEVOTIONS – WEEK 1

22 March 2020

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Gospel Reading

John 9.1-41

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.'" John 9.3-5

Reflection

The context of this story is the Feast of Tabernacles, with its rituals of water and light. Once again John uses symbolic language to teach spiritual truths.

The blind man gains not only physical sight but also growing understanding and faith however Jesus opponents refuse to see as the man sees, and their attitudes reveal a spiritual darkness.

The blind man is not only poor because he cannot work for a living, he is also excluded from the Temple worship and stigmatised as a sinner because of his disability. For Jesus to heal him, a man who has been blind from birth, is a staggering miracle and one that would have been life-changing for this man. It would have opened new worlds for him – beauty, shape and colour – as well as becoming part of the community again, to work and worship with others. It is also a sign of God's coming Isaiah 29.18 *'On that day ... out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.'*

What joy and gratefulness the man must have felt. Yet sadly, the religious leaders could not rejoice with him and tried to deny it happened and tried to blame him or his parents for his blindness. This was because they could not believe that Jesus was sent from God. While the religious leaders cannot see what God is doing in their midst, the man becomes more open to the truth of Jesus and declares his faith.

It is a common human reaction to suffering, 'Why me? Why them?' People thought illness was a result of sin. But the book of Job reveals that suffering is not caused by sin, but part of the human condition.

How do we understand the spread of the Corona Virus? This story would suggest that it is NOT a punishment from God for some sin, as is often brought out in such situations, but rather a negative result of the spread of germs that can happen in our world. Therefore, we are not to blame people for getting it, but rather to seek ways to show how God wants to reveal his love and goodness and his desire to bring healing and wholeness to all in Christ.

Yes we can limit its spread by following the instructions of short term socially isolation for those who have it and socially distancing ourselves from each other for a while, but we can also pray and support health workers and scientists as they seek to curb its spread and bring healing for those infected. I am heartened by the way that so many are joining in support of neighbours and friends, who are isolated because of these restrictions. This may be through popping by to ask how people are, or picking up groceries and medicines or other acts of kindness and concern. May we as Christ's followers today show his grace and mercy to others and build a sense of community and care.

Prayer

Gracious God, we do not fully understand why there is illness and death in the world, but we know that you came in Christ to bring healing and hope. We pray for all those affected by the virus, for medical staff caring for those infected and for ourselves that we might keep open to see your goodness and light.