

St Thomas the Apostle Church

Take-Home Lenten Program 2011

Week IV

Focus Passage: The Gospel for Sunday, March 27

Seeing is Believing



prepared by Adult Education in
cooperation with the Natural Church Development
Steering Committee

**This material is also distributed in
our weekly church bulletin**

Welcome to week 4 of our Take- Home Bible Study.

Each week we make suggestions about how you might choose to respond to these studies, but we leave it up to you to decide what is right for you. This week we encourage you to journal about the passage - write about 2 pages of your thoughts, feelings and impressions - and pray about your journal entries. Spend whatever time is needed to allow you to feel that you have learned something of value from the passage and your journal entry.

Contact Carol Kauk, chair, Adult Ed through the parish office (613-733-0336)

We have arranged for an online discussion of our study material in a blog at stthomasaltavistablogspot.com Why not check it out?

Thoughts

When things go bad, have you ever somehow felt that you deserved it? Have you ever thought someone got "just what they deserve"? The focus passage shows how ancient people assumed that illness and misfortune were punishment for sin. They then interpreted their lives and those of others according to this assumption. Hence the question about whose sin had caused this man's blindness. The people of the day, convinced they were right in their interpretation, clung to their convictions and their convoluted reasoning. Why? From fear? From habit? From legalism and human reasoning? What did Jesus say?

Once again we encounter the idea of God's judgement being His correction of our ways. Jesus realigns our false ideas and the actions they cause. He demonstrates that God's judgement can change both the wrongs people suffer and the wrongs people perpetuate. Does the pain come, then, in resisting God's corrections? Jesus' actions and his words make it clear that the man's condition is an opportunity to display the life-changing power of God. In the words of the healed man, "one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." and "If this man were not from God, He could do nothing."

On another level, seeing is understanding which can lead to believing. In the Samuel lesson we are reminded that God does not see outward appearance or circumstances, but what is in people's hearts. This is the criteria by which God sets apart (anoints) David, Jesus, and all of His servants, even us. We are reminded of this in the appointed refrain for the 23rd psalm, "The Lord anointed his servant." Jesus also 'anointed' the eyes of the blind man, using spittle, commonly understood to have healing powers, and common mud. This establishes His healing action as a simple, down to earth reality. The Epistle gives us an idea of the actions of someone who truly has discovered the light of understanding and belief - of seeing in the light of God. These are the actions of discipleship.

We see a bit of biblical humour when the healed man ask the Pharisees, "Why do you want to hear it (my story) again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?" We are reminded that disciples are followers - those who act like and embrace the discipline of their leader rather than a set of ritualized formulistic actions. We, as Jesus disciples, are called to "walk as children of light", as Jesus does, because our former darkness has been dispelled.

Readings for Lent 4

1 Samuel 16: 1-13 Psalm 23

*Refrain: The Lord anointed his servant with oil
Ephesians 5: 8-14 John 9: 1-41*

This Week's Challenge:

Ephesians 4:15 tells us "We will speak the truth in love. We will grow up into Christ in every way. He is the Head." Pray about the circumstances of this week that you, as Jesus' disciple, might be able to speak truthfully and lovingly to those you meet.

A Prayer for Week 3

Jesus, Source of Living Water, we give you thanks for a world full of wonder, but above all that you have called us into a holy community with you and with each other. Guide us in the ways of this new creation, rooted and grounded, nourished and sustained in you. **Amen**

Focus Passage

John 9: 1-41 As Jesus 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 neighbours 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 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.


³⁵Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" ³⁷Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you." ³⁸And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him. ³⁹And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." ⁴⁰Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" ⁴¹Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."


Points to Ponder


 Do we tend to make our spirituality more complicated than we need to? Who in the story took a simple approach and who didn't?

 How are the various people in this story "blind"? How do they reveal their blindness? How does Jesus react to these demonstrations of spiritual blindness?

 What phrase or phrases from the focus passage stand out to you? What personal meaning do they have for you?

 Can you think of an experience that seemed to be unfortunate but turned out to also be a blessing? How do you see God acting in all aspects of life, the auspicious and the adverse?

 Jesus reminds the Pharisees that "since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains." They remain spiritually blind. Is this their choice? Is this God's condemnation? How is Jesus calling them to change (be corrected)?

 Is belief an action? Is it based on or shown through the actions of the believer?



in Your
light
we see
light