

“Seeing the Light in Dark Times”

When we come face to face with suffering or tragedy – things like blindness, viruses, pandemics, sickness and death – we know that things are NOT as they should be. This is NOT how it was “in the beginning” – the way God created things to be.

And then we move quickly to the investigation phase so that we can properly assign blame. Who’s the culprit? Who’s to blame? Assign the proper punishment – so that we can move on with our lives.

There’s nothing like a pandemic to straighten us out – to give us a little reality check. They call this a “novel” virus – in other words, it’s new, no one has ever been exposed to it – which means that no one is immune.

With this pandemic, we don’t know how far it will spread – how many will be infected – or how many will die. But like all other sufferings and tragedies – we know the source of this one is sin. The sin pandemic has spread to all mankind – and therefore – death has come to all mankind.

THIS pandemic simply preaches a sermon that is preached with every suffering, illness, and death. It preaches the truth – that we have all sinned – that we are all mortal – that we all will die.

This whole question of – “who sinned” – misses the point! Why is this man blind? Why is there this pandemic? Jesus tells us! “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

What!?! God is responsible for this – He’s to blame? NO – and stop trying to find someone to blame – that’s not the point! The point is that God is at work, even now – for the sake of all mankind – for the sake of all sinners.

What’s He up to? Spoiler alert – I’ll fast forward to the end of St. John’s Gospel where He tells us the point of Jesus doing all these miraculous works. “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.” (20:30-31)

That's the point of this man's blindness. That's what God is doing in the midst of this pandemic. God is at work so that you may believe in Jesus – and believing, have life in His name.

As you read through St. John's Gospel – you see his use of the light and darkness imagery. Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night (he's in the dark). The Samaritan woman comes to the well at high noon – and there's Jesus – the Light of the world, shining on her. But she's still in the dark.

Now others who are "in the dark" are presented to us – not just a blind man (imagine what it was like to have never seen light) – but the disciples, neighbors, parents, and Pharisees. That is who we are by nature – spiritually blind – unable to see the things of God.

The Light of the world is right there, shining on them – but they say things like – "who sinned ... is this the man ... this Jesus is not from God ... He's a sinner ... is this your son ... I don't know where He is ... we don't know where Jesus comes from ... you were born in utter sin ... who is this Son of Man?" Blind people walking in the dark.

Dearly beloved, we live in dark times – surrounded by clouds of hopelessness and fear – walking through the valley of the shadow of death. We are blinded by the pandemic – even as the Light of the world stands right before our eyes – shining into our world, giving glory to God.

What's He doing? (He's not being very hygienic, nor is He practicing social distancing.) He's spitting – making mud from the dust, like He created Adam from the dust "in the beginning" – putting the spit-mud on his eyes ("let there be light"), re-creating this man who was born blind.

He takes simple water, includes it with His command and combines it with His Word – "Go ... wash ... So he went and washed and came back seeing." The blind man's eyes are opened – but he still does not see. His eyes are working – but not yet does he believe in Jesus Christ – he does not yet have life in His name!

In the same way – being delivered from a pandemic – being cured from respiratory distress – is not ultimately what God is about. Being healed – but not seeing Jesus as your Savior – falls short of the eternal life that God desires for you.

Jesus has come to find you today. Do you believe that this is my body, this is my blood? Do you believe that it is for you, for the forgiveness of all your sins? Do you believe that the Son of Man stands in your presence today – rescuing you from all evil? Do you believe that in Him you have life – even if you get sick and die?

In the darkness of these days – Jesus, who healed the blind man, and many more (some recorded in Scripture, some not) – comes to you, healing you, giving you eyes that see – so that “you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”

Dearly beloved, you are baptized into Christ. You are a new creation. In Jesus, you HAVE life – eternal life. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.