

**FROM YOUR CHURCH TO YOUR HOME,
WE ARE WORSHIPPING TOGETHER**

March 22, 2020 – 10:00 am



Jesus heals the man born blind

CALL TO WORSHIP:

God, sometimes, the days are long, the nights are even longer, and we're so tired. And then You soothe us and bring us to gentle places.

Sometimes, life is moving too fast, and we can't find a moment to breathe. And then You surround us with stillness and bring an even rhythm to our breath.

Sometimes, we're parched, and it seems nothing will quench our thirst, We're famished and we can't find anything to eat. And then You refresh and fill us.

Sometimes, the valley is dark and the shadows are heavy and we're afraid. But then we feel Your strength, and we have courage.

There are the times when it seems we're up against the world, You show those who push the hardest that You have called us to serve.

You touch us, and we are blessed.

We will praise You and dwell with you forever, O God.

We will worship You this day and always!

PRAYER OF INVOCATION:

Magnificent God who sees all that we can see and everything that we cannot, we gather in awe of your vision that is broad and vast. Be with us now as we worship you. Awaken us to your holiness, inspire us with your creative power, and peel back our layers of anxiety and fear. Enliven us to trust fully in your love for us as we struggle and strive to be who you call us to be, in Christ's holy name. Amen.

GOSPEL READING: John 9:1-41

9 As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who was blind from birth. ² Jesus' disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned so that he was born blind, this man or his parents?"

³ Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents. This happened so that God's mighty works might be displayed in him. ⁴ While it's daytime, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶ After he said this, he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and smeared the mud on the man's eyes. ⁷ Jesus said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (this word means *sent*). So the man went away and washed. When he returned, he could see.

⁸ The man's neighbors and those who used to see him when he was a beggar said, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?"

⁹ Some said, “It is,” and others said, “No, it’s someone who looks like him.”

But the man said, “Yes, it’s me!”

¹⁰ So they asked him, “How are you now able to see?”

¹¹ He answered, “The man they call Jesus made mud, smeared it on my eyes, and said, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed, and then I could see.”

¹² They asked, “Where is this man?”

He replied, “I don’t know.”

¹³ Then they led the man who had been born blind to the Pharisees. ¹⁴ Now Jesus made the mud and smeared it on the man’s eyes on a Sabbath day. ¹⁵ So Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see.

The man told them, “He put mud on my eyes, I washed, and now I see.”

¹⁶ Some Pharisees said, “This man isn’t from God, because he breaks the Sabbath law.” Others said, “How can a sinner do miraculous signs like these?” So they were divided. ¹⁷ Some of the Pharisees questioned the man who had been born blind again: “What do you have to say about him, since he healed your eyes?”

He replied, “He’s a prophet.”

¹⁸The Jewish leaders didn’t believe the man had been blind and received his sight until they called for his parents. ¹⁹The Jewish leaders asked them, “Is this your son? Are you saying he was born blind? How can he now see?”

²⁰His parents answered, “We know he is our son. We know he was born blind. ²¹But we don’t know how he now sees, and we don’t know who healed his eyes. Ask him. He’s old enough to speak for himself.” ²²His parents said this because they feared the Jewish authorities. This is because the Jewish authorities had already decided that whoever confessed Jesus to be the Christ would be expelled from the synagogue. ²³That’s why his parents said, “He’s old enough. Ask him.”

²⁴Therefore, they called a second time for the man who had been born blind and said to him, “Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner.”

²⁵The man answered, “I don’t know whether he’s a sinner. Here’s what I do know: I was blind and now I see.”

²⁶They questioned him: “What did he do to you? How did he heal your eyes?”

²⁷ He replied, “I already told you, and you didn’t listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?”

²⁸ They insulted him: “You are his disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples. ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but we don’t know where this man is from.”

³⁰ The man answered, “This is incredible! You don’t know where he is from, yet he healed my eyes! ³¹ We know that God doesn’t listen to sinners. God listens to anyone who is devout and does God’s will. ³² No one has ever heard of a healing of the eyes of someone born blind. ³³ If this man wasn’t from God, he couldn’t do this.”

³⁴ They responded, “You were born completely in sin! How is it that you dare to teach us?” Then they expelled him.

³⁵ Jesus heard they had expelled the man born blind. Finding him, Jesus said, “Do you believe in the Human One?”^[a]

³⁶ He answered, “Who is he, sir?^[b] I want to believe in him.”

³⁷ Jesus said, “You have seen him. In fact, he is the one speaking with you.”

³⁸ The man said, “Lord,^[c] I believe.” And he worshipped Jesus.

³⁹ Jesus said, “I have come into the world to exercise judgment so that those who don’t see can see and those who see will become blind.”

⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were with him heard what he said and asked, “Surely we aren’t blind, are we?”

⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you wouldn’t have any sin, but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.

MESSAGE: This story, as told in the Gospel of John, is a favorite of many preachers; mostly because it is humorous at times. The Pharisees ask the man who was healed from his blindness, who healed him. “What did he look like?” they asked. How does the blind man know? He was blind and couldn’t see until he came back from washing in the pool of Siloam. Jesus had moved by then.

At the heart of this story is the question of **what is sin**. According to Gail O’Day’s commentary, “in the Fourth Gospel, ‘sin’ is not a moral category about behavior but a theological category about one’s response to the revelation of God in Jesus.” (O’Day 98) It’s all about response. Pharisees are proud Jews who follow the law of Moses. Anyone who doesn’t follow these laws is a sinner. That is their response. The man born blind responds differently.

The Pharisees say Jesus is a sinner because he worked on the Sabbath (one of the laws); Jesus spit on dirt to make a salve. Thus, the Pharisees respond that Jesus is not from God. The people who witnessed the healing respond differently. “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” they ask.

The man who has been healed is questioned again by the Pharisees. He is no longer the passive recipient of his healing or frightened like his parents. He actively confronts the authorities with the contradictions in their own position. The scope of his healing (being born blind and now he can see) is unprecedented and is only possible if God is its source, according to the man who was once blind. The authorities’ response to his argument is not one of logic but of arrogance (O’Day 101). They insist on an understanding of “sin” that recalls the disciples’ opening question in verse 2, and this perspective makes it difficult for them to “judge rightly” in this instance. In other words, the Pharisees are blind.

From the contrast between the man’s reasoned confession and the authorities’ irrational assertion of their own authority, it is not hard to decide who in this story represents the kind of right judgment to which the Gospel calls its readers.

Jesus came into the world to be a light. Sight and blindness are not defined by one’s physical sight but by one’s openness to the revelation of God in Jesus. (O’Day 102).

What is our response to this revelation?

Amen.

HYMN OF RESPONSE: “Open My Eyes That I May See” Public Domain

Open my eyes, that I may see glimpses of truth Thou hast for me;
Place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp, and set me free.
Silently now I wait for Thee, ready, my God, Thy will to see:
Open my eyes, illumine me, Savior Divine!

Open my ears, that I may hear Thy word of truth Thou sendest clear;
And while the wave-notes fall on my ear, ev’rything false will disappear.
Silently now I wait for Thee, ready, my God, Thy will to see:
Open my ears, illumine me, Savior Divine!

Open my mouth, and let me bear gladly the warm truth ev’rywhere;
Open my heart, and let me prepare love with Thy children thus to share.
Silently now I wait for Thee, ready, my God, Thy will to see:
Open my heart, illumine me, Savior Divine!

THE LORD’S PRAYER: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver

us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen.

***BENEDICTION:**

(adapted from Ephesians 5: 9-14)

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light.

Live as children of light! Seek that which is good and right and true,
and try to live in a way that pleases God.

Look to the light of God's love shown to us in Jesus. Do not hide from it or
ignore the struggles of the world but awaken to God's call.

Arise, O sleeper, and Christ will give you light!

Amen.

Liturgy was written by the Rev. Kim Wood, Acting Associate Conference Minister, Illinois Conference, UCC.

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Gail R. O'Day, Susan E. Hysten "John – Westminster Bible Companion"; 2006, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky

FOR FURTHER STUDY, the other scripture texts for today include 1 Samuel 16:1-13, Psalm 23, and Ephesians 5:8-14. For those on computers, I recommend Bible Gateway.com to find all scripture texts in any translation you prefer.

PRAYER: Remember in your personal prayers all those affected by the Corona Virus including the economic affects of this Public Health crisis. People are losing their jobs as bars and restaurants are closed except for drive thru or pick up.

OFFERING: As you can imagine, even if worship services and meetings are postponed right now, we still need to pay the electric bill and other expenses. Our custodians will remain available for keeping our facility as clean as possible. Once we are ready to reopen, they will sanitize the facility again. In the meantime, they will also mow the lawn as needed.

SO PLEASE MAIL IN YOUR OFFERINGS OR ARRANGE TO HAVE THEM TAKEN OUT OF YOUR BANK ACCOUNT. Ginny will be picking up the mail, but Judy will not be in the office unless needed, so you may not be able to get in the church to drop off your offerings.

KEEP YOURSELF WELL: The experts believe this virus is passed by the respiratory system. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Try not to touch your face. Stay away from groups of people of 10 or more and try to stay 6 feet away from any other person. Don't shake hands. Cough into your elbow. Stay home as much as possible.

CARE FOR YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND NEIGHBORS: Use your telephone to connect with others. Staying home can be lonely. Talking with others can cheer them up and also brighten your day.

I'm praying for all of you and missing your smiling faces. Please watch for more notes and mini-worship services from me.

Peace, Pastor Rosemary 660-8894

