



Prayer & reflection – Sunday March 22nd

Bible reading - John 9.1-12

A Man Born Blind Receives Sight

The full story can be found in John's Gospel chapter 9 verses 1 - 41

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' 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.' When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent).

Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The 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?' Some were saying, 'It is he.' Others were saying, 'No, but it is someone like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.' But they kept asking him, 'Then how were your eyes opened?' He 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.' They said to him, 'Where is he?' He said, 'I do not know.'

Reflection

We're all living in difficult and testing times. We find ourselves in a situation which neither this country nor the global community could have foreseen just a few months ago. Many people in the world are displaced with great concerns about how they will return home as travel bans increase. Many already lonely or isolated people will become increasingly vulnerable. People have difficult choices to make about forthcoming weddings, baptisms and funerals – where numbers attending such occasions will be extremely limited. There is much to focus our prayers on.

The notion that acts of public worship are not allowed to go ahead is, for many people of faith, both disturbing and distressing. As far as possible we will keep our church buildings open so that people may use them for short times of personal prayer, thought and reflection. I would also encourage everyone to find some time in each day to pause and take some time of stillness and silence to pray for our world, for those who are sick or bereaved, for those who are struggling with social isolation, for those who work in difficult and stressful places and situations.



Today's reading is one of the many healing stories in the Bible. The disciples assume that there is somehow 'sin' (however we may understand that word) involved in the man's blindness – there's a human need to find blame for the situation, and also the notion that if this is caused by sin then others are safe because they believe themselves not to have sinned. Jesus is clear that no sin is involved here, and the healing is surely to show the power of faith and the glory of God.

Around the world in the coming weeks and months many people will pray – from every faith perspective – for those they love to be healed and restored to strength. The prayer will be strengthening, encouraging, comforting. It may restore faith. It may bring peace of heart and mind. It will bind people together in their isolation. But let's not pray only for healing and restoration of those we love. Let's pray also for those working long hours searching for a vaccine, searching for an antibody test; for those working in caring and healthcare; for those keeping supplies in the shops. And let's pray also for healing and restoration of our world as we each seek to offer whatever care, support, comfort and company to others within our community and beyond.

Prayers

Collect for the fourth Sunday in Lent

Merciful Lord,
absolve your people from their offences,
that through your bountiful goodness
we may all be delivered from the chains of those sins
which by our frailty we have committed;
grant this, heavenly Father,
for Jesus Christ sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen

*Take some time to pray in silence for those who are sick,
those who are bereaved
and those who are on your own heart and mind this day.*



The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven.
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

From St Teresa of Avila

Let nothing disturb thee.
Nothing affright thee;
All things are passing;
God never changeth.
Patient endurance attaineth to all things;
Who God possesseth in nothing is wanting;
Alone God surfficeth.

A Blessing

May the eternal God enfold you with love,
fill you with peace,
and lead you in hope
to the end of your days.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be with you this day and always. Amen