



Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 22, 2020

Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace  
[www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org](http://www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org)

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Our Gospel for today – the whole of chapter 9 of John – tells the story of a man who was born blind being now able to see through the healing of JESUS. Seeing as how this is the year 2020, we could say that this man now has perfect 2020 vision.

Throughout chapter 9, we see 4 different reactions to JESUS.

1. The neighbours revealed surprise and scepticism.
2. The Pharisees showed disbelief and prejudice.
3. The parents believed but kept quiet for fear of excommunication. And
4. The healed man showed consistent, growing faith.

Each reaction to JESUS allowed the man to reach a clearer understanding of the One who had healed him.

A common belief in Jewish culture was that calamity or suffering was the result of some great sin. But CHRIST used this man's suffering to teach about faith and to glorify GOD. We live in a fallen world where good behaviour is not always rewarded; and bad behaviour not

always punished. Therefore, innocent people sometimes suffer. If GOD took away suffering whenever we asked, we would follow Him for comfort and convenience – not out of love and devotion. Regardless of the reasons for our suffering, JESUS has the power to help us deal with it. When we suffer from a disease, tragedy or disability, we must try NOT to ask: “WHY DID THIS HAPPEN TO ME?” or “WHAT DID I DO WRONG?” Instead, we need to ask GOD to give us strength for the trial and a clearer perspective on what is happening.

When JESUS spit on the ground and made mud in order to repair the man’s eyes, He was working with original materials. Genesis 2 tells us: **7then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground.** On Ash Wednesday, at the imposition of ashes I say to you: **“From dust you came and to dust you shall return.”** JESUS was demonstrating here a creator’s awareness of the materials He first used to shape the human body. The pool of Siloam was originally built by Hezekiah – 13<sup>th</sup> King of Judah. His workers constructed an underground

tunnel from a spring outside the city walls to carry water into the city. Thus, the people could always get water without fear of being attacked – especially important during times of siege.

While the Pharisees conducted investigations and debated about JESUS, people were being healed and lives were being changed. The Pharisees' scepticism was based not on insufficient evidence but on jealousy of JESUS' popularity and His influence on the people.

The Jewish Sabbath was the weekly holy day of rest. The Pharisees made a long list of specific do's and don'ts regarding the Sabbath. Kneading the clay and healing the man were considered work and therefore forbidden. JESUS may have purposely made the clay in order to emphasise His teaching about the Sabbath – that it is right to care for others' needs even if it involves working on a day of rest.

As the passage progresses, the man who had been blind had heard the same questions over and over again. He did not know how or why he was healed; but he knew his

life had been miraculously changed; and he was not afraid to tell the truth. We don't need to know all the answers in order to share CHRIST with others. It is important to tell them how He has changed our lives. Then we need to trust that GOD will use our words to help others believe in Him too.

The man's new faith was severely tested by some of the authorities. He was cursed and evicted from the synagogue. JESUS warns us that persecution may come when we begin to follow JESUS. We may lose friends; we may even lose our lives. But no one can ever take away the eternal life JESUS gives us.

This man gained not only the physical sight but the spiritual sight as he recognised JESUS first as a prophet, then as his LORD and Saviour. When we turn to CHRIST, we begin to see Him differently. The longer we walk with Him, the better we will understand who He is. Peter tells us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. (2 Peter 3:18) If we

want to know more about JESUS, we need to keep trusting Him in every area of our lives.

Finally, the Pharisees were shocked that JESUS thought that they were spiritually blind. JESUS countered by saying that it was only blindness – stubbornness and stupidity – that could excuse their behaviour. To those who remained open and recognised how sin had truly blinded them from knowing the truth, He gave spiritual understanding and insight. But He rejected those who became complacent, self-satisfied and blind.



We can find much of ourselves in our Gospel passage for today. When the blind man was healed, he did not know who this JESUS person was. He was healed of his blindness immediately but in order for him to gain his proper sight, it took the period of our entire gospel passage to see who JESUS really was – and is. Every time somebody else asked him who it was that healed him, he answers with a bit more clarity; until at the end, when he again encounters JESUS, the man knows who JESUS is. And he knows this, thanks in part, to all the

questions he has grappled with along the way. Life experience is a wonderful thing – as long as we use it well.

Today is also Mothering Sunday – the fourth Sunday of Lent. The name has been referred to:

1. The custom in some parts of England of visiting one's mother on this day – treated as Mothers' Day rather than the second Sunday on May;
2. The practice of visiting the cathedral or mother church on this day; or
3. A reference to Jerusalem in Galatians 4:26 described as the mother of us all. A special kind of cake – SIMNEL CAKE – is made to celebrate the occasion.

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In your goodness O GOD, you come into the lives of all who are burdened in life. You sent your Son to give sight to the blind and hope to those who long for your mercy. Grant that we might see with our hearts and give you praise with our lives. We pray this in the name of JESUS CHRIST our LORD who lives and reigns with you in the

unity of the Holy Spirit, one GOD for ever and ever.  
Amen.

References:

Welborn, Amy – 2020 A Book of Grace-Filled Days

Daily Prayer 2020

Life Application Study Bible