

SERMON – LENT 4

March 19, 2023

“Judgement, Controversy, Spiritual Sight”

Lent is a time for reflection, repentance, and renewal.

It is a season where we reflect on our mortality, our imperfections, and our need for redemption. It is a time to draw closer to God and to one another, to seek forgiveness, and to make amends.

As we continue in this penitential season, we do so as the church universal, embracing this time with an open heart and enquiring mind, united in our commitment to growth and renewal. Being open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with the willingness to make the necessary changes in our lives to draw closer to God, we are guaranteed heavenly reward.¹ One of the changes that one is required to make is to stop seeing things only in the natural, but also in the spiritual, as is so carefully presented here by John in today’s Gospel.

This story of the man born blind, recorded in Chapter 9, is one of judgement, controversy and spiritual sight. One has to be careful about stealing the joy of others at the same time: for in this act by Jesus, so miraculous, allowing someone to be able to use their eyes to see for the first time, seemed to have been lost on the crowd.

Jesus’ disciples started the argument, for they questioned the man’s blindness, wondering if his blindness was caused by his

¹ Matthew 5:12; Luke 6:23

own sin of the sin of his parents. What did that matter? The man is healed!

This miracle was not lost on the Pharisees, the protectors of the law and defenders of the Sabbath. Their concern was one of skepticism. They questioned the authenticity of the healer, Jesus – for he could not be God at all! Majoring in the minor oftentimes get people in trouble.

Jesus answered that the man's blindness was so that the works of God might be displayed 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."

Even after those profound words, the Pharisees, were still perturbed. They kept on seeking for answers that could satisfy them. They even went to the man's parents to interrogate them!

They were wise in their response, to avoid being excommunicated for their belief in Jesus. The sad truth is that the church today is still being persecuted for her faith.

In an article by Christianity Today, it reports that in this year 2023, "...Overall, 360 million Christians live in nations with high levels of persecution or discrimination. That's 1 in 7 Christians worldwide, including 1 in 5 believers in Africa, 2 in 5 in Asia, and 1 in 15 in Latin America..."²

² [The 50 Countries Where It's Hardest to Follow Jesus in... | News & Reporting | Christianity Today](#)

Christians are standing up for their faith. Here is a question for all of us here gathered. What if persecution of this magnitude comes to our front doors today? With what is happening in the world, our safety is at risk.

So we go back to the story and ask the question, to what end were the Pharisees seeking answers? Who had the real power in this story about the man born blind? This story seems to me, to parallel the number of times the devil went to Jesus in the wilderness, wanting Jesus to deny the power of who was behind the written Word. For each time Jesus said to the devil "It is written!"

John tells us that Jesus later found the man and revealed himself to him, and the man believed and worshiped Jesus.

Jesus then explained to his hearers that he came into the world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind.

The Pharisees in the story represent many people today and even some Christians, who claimed to have sight - only physical sight, but were spiritually blind. They were spiritually blind because they refused to see, to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God.

Today, we are living in a world that is described as secular. The pain of those who cannot see is felt by Christians, true worshippers.

How do we find the courage to share the Word with those who cannot see what we see and hear what we hear and know what

we know? How do we share the Gospel with others so that they too can see things from a spiritual perspective, when beliefs and values vary along a seemingly unending continuum?

As Christians we are to know the Scripture, so that we can be armed to defend the Gospel of Christ and him crucified. The ecclesia is a group of believers on a mission. We are the Church, believers in a higher power and are equipped with spiritual lens to help the world today. Jesus taught us that one must be born again to see the kingdom of God, emphasizing the need for spiritual transformation. The Gospel is essential for spiritual growth and understanding and the world is waiting to hear from us.

As we share with one another, let us tell of how we have been healed and blessed and continue to be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us help others to see a higher power and to surrender their agendas for God's agenda. Let us point out to others how it is important to take that step of faith to come forward, to believe and to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, as the man with new sight did.

May we learn to avoid arguing and majoring in the minor. May we give our ears the opportunity to listen and to understand. May our eyes be opened to see spiritually and may we like Nicodemus, like the woman at the well, like this man who received his sight, go out and spread the good news, so that others can enter the sheepfold of Christ and find pasture and declare like the Psalmist – "Surely goodness and mercy shall

follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord, for ever.”³ Amen.

³ Psalm 23:6