

Today is the Fourth Sunday in Lent, commonly known as Mothering Sunday — a day when we remember the mothers & other nurturers in our lives. This is a day to give thanks for the hands that held us, the eyes that watched over us, & the voices that guided us when we could not see our own way. But more than that, this is a day to remember the God who nurtures & cares for us in the same steady, intimate way — a God who notices, guides, & restores us. As the prophet Isaiah quotes the Word of God: "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you" (66:13).

We find such references throughout Scripture, but for many of us, Psalm 23 gives the go-to picture of God's care: *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul."*

God knows the weight we carry & meets us where we are, giving us rest when we are weary, & strength to get up & continue on. And God is with us not just in green pastures but through the shadowy valleys as well, giving heart to those in need.

And this brings me to today's gospel, where Jesus heals the man born blind. You see, blindness sets him apart. And this brings out ignorance & cruelty in some people — mocking & making fun of him (as people

will). While others kept it clean — sublimating their cruelty by invoking God’s judgement. And these ones ask the familiar question, “*Who sinned, this man or his parents?*”

As humans with minds to think & leisure to be curious, we are exceptionally good at putting things in tidy little boxes. When we see someone struck by tragedy, often our first instinct is to search for a reason that restores order to the world. We assume they did something wrong. They must have ignored the warnings. They invited the misfortune. The assumptions are rarely spoken aloud, but they linger beneath our sympathy. If the person can be shown to have caused their suffering, then the world remains predictable — & we can reassure ourselves that the same thing will not happen to us. We would rather believe that things make sense than accept that, like the sunshine, pain falls on the innocent as much as it does on the guilty.

So Jesus is asked the question, “Why is this man blind? Who sinned?” And this is one of those questions that Jesus does not deflect but answers straight on. And he does not place guilt on the man or on his parents. Instead, Jesus meets him where he is — broken not just by his physical condition but by the world’s coldness. And Jesus touches him, restores him, gives him life in its fullness. I am always struck by

how physical & embodied their encounter is: Jesus spits on mud & rubs it on his eyes. It reminds me of the description of God breathing life into Adam's nostrils. And then Jesus tells him to go wash in the pool. This detail is important because it makes clear that the man is not merely a passive recipient of grace — *he is called to respond.*

Jesus meets him in the reality of his life, offering attention, dignity, & a renewed place in the community — & before long, he's walking about among people who now stare & point for a different reason, asking, "Isn't that the man that was born blind?"

Some of you know the weight of heavy burdens. You have held infants through hospital procedures only to finally be forced to let go of them, you have raised children who died before you could see them grow into adulthood. Others have grown children who are aloof or silent. You know what it is to give care & to be present. You know the tiring, complicated, & painful reality of caring for others. And I can't tell make any promises that your grief will get any softer, but I can assure you of this: God sees all of it, & God meets us in the work, in the waiting, & in the everyday trials of love.

This is what the psalm & gospel tell us: God sees us. God knows us. God restores us. And God does so in tangible, ordinary ways — a hand offered to steady a step, a quiet presence, a listening ear & shoulder to cry on, a meal shared, a prayer spoken — something understood. And that is how we are called to live. To see others as God sees them, & to do unto them as we would wish if we walked in their shoes: offering attention & presence, reflecting the God who walks with us every day.

And so, as we remember our mothers & others, & our Father in heaven who loves & cares for us, today is a call to live that for ourselves: to notice others' burdens, to offer our presence, walking beside those who cannot yet see clearly, reminding them of this:

You are seen.

You are known.

You are being guided.

You will be restored.

And with that reminder, may we all become instruments of God's care & love, walking alongside one another with tenderness, attention, & compassion, in all the ordinary & extraordinary moments of life.
Amen.