
✠ I preach in God's name for God's people. Let my words be from God and for God's people. **Amen**

Good evening.

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

The words spoken over us on Ash Wednesday are already beginning to fade. That evening, you were startled into hearing that Jesus said, *When you fast*, and even more so, that I then began preaching a Lenten series on fasting—fasting from food, from drink, from shopping, from scrolling, from pride.

What we then saw was that the forty days of fasting prepared Jesus to withstand temptation from Satan. We found, surprisingly, that fasting had not weakened, but had strengthened Jesus. Conversely, “when we *always* give in to comforts, to pleasures, to desires,” we may find that our faith is not strengthened, but weakened.

The next Wednesday we were given a contrast—the Ninevites who believed Jonah's preaching (and fasted!) vs. the Priests & Pharisees who did not believe Jesus. We want to be like those Ninevites who repent & believe.

The following Wednesday, we heard the mother of James & John ask that her sons be made the greatest in Christ's kingdom. We found that the hierarchy in Christ's kingdom works very differently than power and greatness in this world. If we want to be great in his kingdom, we will need to fast from our pride and climb—not up!—but down the ladder to serve one another.

Last Wednesday, we heard that the Pharisees had elevated their traditions to that of moral law. We are tempted to do the same in our day—and I gave the bristling example of the shopping cart return. Returning that shopping cart, as good as it is, will not grant us special moral status with God. For that, we need to remain steadfast in faith in him—and that involves keeping his commandments, just as good children keep the good rules their parents give them.

And now, with those ominous words of Ash Wednesday now fading, comes the fact that Spring is very near, and also close, that glorious Dawn of Easter morning.

When we look closely at this evening's Gospel passage—when we sit in this passage for long enough—we begin to see that this story foreshadows Easter, that this story *expects* Easter to come.

Jesus makes a blind man see. And when we look closely enough, we see that this man was healed not only from blindness of his eyes, but at the same time, from the blindness of his soul. And so, Jesus gives this man two gifts of sight — the gift of seeing in this world, and the gift of seeing the world to come.

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” 36 He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” 37 Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” 38 He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

This, too, is our goal, our mission, our trajectory in this life: to believe Jesus and to worship him. This is why I end my preaching with doxology, because the great gift and ability of mankind is to recognize the praise due to God and to give it to him.

So, what praiseworthy things do we find in this passage?

The blind man sees. No one sees without light. And so it's no surprise that this is exactly what Jesus calls himself: the Light of the World. By the once-blind-man's own mouth, no one has heard of anything happening like this from the beginning of the world. No one, until this man, was made to see.

Both the disciples and the Pharisees are suspicious of the cause of his blindness. The man was not blind because of his sin or his parents' sin. In a certain sense, it's true that sin *is* the cause of the man's blindness. And that's because if there were no sin, there would be no blindness. Blindness is symptomatic—as

are all other maladies—of a world in which sin is present. And so, in curing the man’s blindness, Jesus is revealing not only his power, but what life in his Kingdom is like.

We are beginning to get a glimpse of Jesus’ divine nature. Just one moment more, and we’ll see that no one in all of human history has been made to see except through Jesus, because he is the one through whom the world was made. All of sight is because of his Light; All will see because He is the Light.

Notice that this miracle begins because Jesus is illuminating; his disciples ask him the question about this man because they know it’s the kind of thing he knows.

“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

No one else—no one other than God—has this kind of knowledge. No one else could reveal what Christ reveals.

Sight (or lack thereof) drives this whole story. It’s because the disciples see the man, and are curious, that anything happens. It’s because Jesus wants to make his disciples—and you and me—be given the eyes of faith, that the man is healed.

And so we find out that this man is blind in order that he be given the gift of sight, in order that he may be given the gift of faith, in order to confound the Pharisees, in order to strengthen the disciples, in order to fill even those of us here this evening with faith.

But thereafter sight becomes a problem for nearly all those who can see. His neighbors and those who had seen him before are *not sure* that the seeing man is the same as the blind man. Those who had regularly seen him no longer recognize him. Their sight has failed. They are now blind.

The Pharisees and Priests cannot see how the man could have been blind. We might wonder how often these same men were purposefully blind to this man, avoiding seeing this beggar day by day. They, too, are blind.

And so, they bring out this man, then his parents, then this man again, because they are deliberately blind to what is being said. They refuse the testimony of this man; the parents, seeing that they will get in trouble, pretend to not know how he was healed; the man comes and repeats his testimony. And in so doing, he shows himself to be radiant in wisdom in contrast to the darkness of the Pharisees’ minds. Because for all they have heard and seen, the Pharisees still pretend to not know who Jesus must be:

We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.”

The troubling thing, according to them, is that Jesus has done this miracle—never done ever—on a Sabbath. The troubling thing, for us, is that the Pharisees don’t realize that Jesus has given this man Sabbath *rest* by giving him Sabbath *sight*.

I’ll close with a vision. After the man has been expelled (excommunicated) from the synagogue, Jesus finds the man to investigate his faith.

“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

When Jesus says this, he is using this title—Son of Man—to mean that all the prophecies about the Son of Man in the Old Testament are about him. And, so, drawing from our Daniel Bible Study, here is Daniel’s *vision* about the Son of Man:

[13] *“I saw in the night visions,*

*and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,*

*and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.*

[14] *And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,*

*that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13–14, ESV)*

And so, we see that Daniel was given a glimpse of Christ, the Light of the World, who healed our blind man. Jesus is the one whose glory, whose kingdom, and whose dominion shall not pass away.

These are comforting words, because they are reliable promises, especially in a topsy-turvy time of kingdoms again rising and falling in this world.

But more than pure comfort, the promise of Christ's Kingdom means that we will meet this man who once was blind, but who now sees with the brightness and brilliance of The Light of the World.

And so, it's no surprise that this *Light of the World* entered this world with his Star, and it's no surprise that the resurrection takes place at the break of dawn.

May we see the things in this life with the eyes of faith, and may our eyes be fixed on Christ, the Light of the World.

For Christ our Lord is worthy of all worship and praise and glory and honor and majesty, now and forever.
Amen and amen.