



## March 22, 2020

### Fourth Sunday in Lent

The scripture passages assigned for today are:

[1 Samuel 16:1-13](#)

[Psalm 23](#)

[Ephesians 5:8-14](#)

[John 9:1-41](#)

*The reflection below is based on the passage from the Gospel of John. Read this passage from whatever version of the Bible you prefer. The version we use in worship at Resurrection is the New Revised Standard Version. It is a long passage, so if you are with a group, consider sharing the reading among several voices.*

#### ***Some thoughts from Pastor Mitch . . .***

As I reflected on the account of Jesus healing the man born blind, I was struck by how eerily similar it is to what we are experiencing right now. I don't know about you, but in some ways, I feel like I am stumbling around rather blindly these days. I really identify with the blind man in the sense that he didn't know what was coming at him, what was happening around him, and who he should listen to and trust when it came to being given information.

And then there's Jesus, trying to help this guy out, and immediately he is criticized, told he is not following the rules, and doing it all wrong. People really aren't listening to each other. Others are trying to assign blame.

Others stop listening when they don't get the answers they want.

Sound anything like the past week to you?

I would imagine that this week has been somewhat surreal for all of us as things have changed rapidly and dramatically in response to the COVID-19 coronavirus. None of us were trained to work – to lead – to follow – to parent – in an environment like this. VERY few people in the world have ever spent time thinking about circumstances like this. This is the stuff that movies are made of – and now we find ourselves as part of the largest cast of movie extras ever assembled!

There is so much that is unknown about what lies ahead of us – we really are "blind." We

are just feeling our way through – figuring out how to navigate through one day, one hour at a time. There are only times I can ever remember feeling this out of my element – this “blind.” The first was 21 years ago when Hayley made her entry into the world six weeks early – and then the second was nearly eight years ago when I had my heart attack and bypass surgery.

*Have you ever had times when you have similarly felt out of your element – felt “blind?”*

And then I think again about the blind man in this scripture passage. He did have people around him trying to help him. And when he emerged from his blindness, there was Jesus, who had accompanied him in his blindness and guided him on the way out of it.

When I think back to my earlier experiences of “blindness,” I recognize a similar reality. Whenever a couple’s first child is born – regardless of whether that child is early, late, or right on time – they find themselves “blind” – in a totally new reality. When we left the hospital after Hayley spent her eight days in the NICU, they didn’t hand us an instruction book. Instead, there were friends and family members there to help and guide us. There were doctors and specialists from First Steps who would help our preemie to thrive and catch up to her peers. Just like the blind man in our story, I believe that all these people were acting as God’s eyes and ears, hands and arms, to help us through our blindness.

Similarly, after I had my heart attack and bypass surgery, my world was upended. I cannot ever remember feeling so helpless – I really was “blind.” Again – like the blind man in our story – there were people caring for me. There were the doctors who repaired my cardiac plumbing and the nurse who went to work on repairing my psyche. There were family and members of this congregation who brought us food; who would come over and just sit with me; who would take me to the mall to walk; who shared their own

experience of navigating the “blindness” of their heart attack. Again, I believe that all these people were acting as God’s eyes and ears, hands and arms, to help me and my family through our blindness.

My primary care doc told me something the first time I saw him after my heart attack – and this idea has helped me and others whom I have shared it with. He said, “You now live in a new neighborhood. The landscape is different. The roads take new twists and turns. The signs are different. BUT – you can live in this neighborhood – it will just take a little time to adjust.”

We all find ourselves living in a new neighborhood after the past week. Many of us are feeling more than just a little “blind.” The good news is that we are not alone in this neighborhood – we have companions along on this journey with us. The evening greater Good News is that Jesus is also alongside of us. He is with us in the midst of this to help us along and to guide us out of this blindness. Our time in this neighborhood is temporary – and in the grand scheme of a lifetime, it will be merely fleeting. We will come out of this time of “blindness” – but perhaps we will come out of it with a different way of seeing the people and the world around us.

This is a time for us to be mindful of our neighbors in this new neighborhood. We must care for one another in ways we have not previously imagined. And as we do, we trust that Jesus is alongside of us, guiding us.

This is also a time to be honest with ourselves – and gentle with one another. Families with kids at home are going to have an awful lot of “togetherness” in the coming weeks. Couples may get tired of only seeing one other face and hearing one other voice. Those who live alone will likely find themselves longing for any sort of human contact.

It will be important for us to talk with each other – and to listen even more than we talk – so that we can help each other through this time of “blindness.” We need to be honest

about what we are feeling. I encourage parents to share with their children what they themselves are feeling – their uncertainties and concerns – to the extent that their children are mature enough to hear it. Our kids are certainly going to pick up on Mom and Dad’s anxieties. We should talk with our spouses, family members, and friends. Pick up the phone and actually call – don’t just

send a text message or e-mail. Good old fashioned conversation will do our souls good during this time.

And above all, trust that God is with us in the midst of this. When we emerge from this time of “blindness,” I imagine that we will all be able to look back over these weeks and see the fingerprints of God’s presence and activity in our midst.

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Here are some ideas for conversation in your home – or perhaps for you to discuss with someone by phone or video chat:

1. Has there been another time in your life when you really felt out of your element – when you felt “blind?”
2. Who were the people who helped you through that time of “blindness?” Have you expressed your appreciation to them?
3. What resources did you find within yourself as you journeyed through that time of “blindness?”
4. How were things different for you after that time of “blindness?”
5. What guidance might you have for someone experiencing a time of “blindness” similar to the one you described above?
6. Where have you seen the “fingerprints” of God recently? Where have you seen evidence of God’s presence and activity?
7. Knowing that life is going to be different for a number of weeks – and then many will rush to resume some sort of normalcy – what do you want to do, accomplish, change, or new habits to develop during this unique period of time?