

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

March 19th, 2023



CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

140 Russell Avenue
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1
Church: 905-685-8294
www.christlutheransc.ca

Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon
Bulletin Announcements: Please send to secretary@christlutheransc.ca.
Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

Pastor: Pastor Todd Hoeffs (289-362-0113) pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com
Parish Assistant: Louise Gondosch (905-329-8579) parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca
Business Manager: Karen McCumber business.manager@christlutheransc.ca
Secretary: Pat Kimpel secretary@christlutheransc.ca
Facebook: Lisa Gall www.facebook.com/ChristLutheranChurchSC
Bulletin by email: Judy Mason chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca

A recording of Sunday's service will be uploaded to YouTube at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpING_TKTi9c_OIBbMqGwLw

Prayer: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning and through we have in no way deserved Your goodness, You still abundantly provide for all our wants of body and soul. Give us, we pray, Your Holy Spirit that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness toward us, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Prayer for Turkey and Syria:

Almighty God, merciful Father, Your thoughts are not our thoughts, and Your ways are not our ways. In Your infinite wisdom which is beyond our understanding, You have permitted this disastrous earthquake to befall the people in Turkey and Syria. Direct all efforts to attend to the injured. Console the bereaved. Protect the helpless, deliver all who are still in danger, and give courage and steadfastness to the relief and aid workers. Bring hope and healing to the suffering that they may find relief and restoration. Open our hearts that we would provide necessary aid to those who are afflicted and distressed by this disaster. All this we ask through the bitter sufferings and death of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You, one God, now and forever.

Prayer for Ukraine:

Please continue to remember in prayer our brothers and sisters of the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Ukraine (SELCU).

DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:

Monday: John 6: 22-29 Wednesday: Mark 12: 28-34 Friday: John 12: 20-26
Tuesday: 1 Kings 19: 1-8 Thursday: John 6: 47-59 Saturday: John 8: 21-30

Musician: Mayumi Munoz **Wednesday:** Carole Pink
Reader: Fran Porteous
Greeters: David & Valerie Rapp

EVENTS THIS WEEK:

Today: 9:10—9:40: **No** Confirmation Class today
Following Service: Youth and Confirmand Event (see note below)
Monday: 7:30 p.m. – Choir Practice
10:00 am – Luther Manor Bible Study – Suspended until April
Tuesday: 9:30 a.m. – Precious Moments
7:00 p.m. – Mary Martha (quilt tying and stamp trimming)
Wednesday: 6:00 p.m. – Praise and Pizza
7:00 p.m. – “Confession and Forgiveness Focus”
8:00 p.m. – Luther Manor Board Meeting
Thursday: 10:00 a.m. – SOUL



From the desk of Pastor Todd

MARCH 2023 WORSHIP SCHEDULE
March 19 – Lent 4 – Creative Morning Praise
March 26 – Lent 5 – LSB DS setting 1 Communion

SUNDAY SCHOOL is held first two Sundays of the month at 9:00 a.m.

PRECIOUS MOMENTS: If you or someone you know would benefit from friendly conversation, a time for kids to play & sing; hear a Bible story and make a craft - please join us Tuesdays in the nursery area from 9:30 to 11 a.m. Coffee and tea are always on.

YOUTH AND CONFIRMANDS are invited to join us **today following service**. We will have a free pasta lunch, then drive to an indoor mini putt in the Falls, then have a treat at DQ. Cost is approximately \$20. Friends are welcome to join us! We have room for 7 youth, however, parents—we may need another driver. Talk with Val, Elizabeth or Louise to reserve a spot or if a parent can drive please let Louise know. (905-339-8579)

Review and Renew


Back to the Basics

What We Believe & Why It Matters
Lenten Focus 2023
Wednesdays Feb 22 – March 29 7-8 PM

- 1) Ash Wednesday Simple Communion & ashes - Purposeful praying or praying with purpose? [Lord's Prayer focus]
- 2) What does "Living Word" mean [10 Commandments focus]
- 3) What happens when I follow God's lead ! [the Apostles' Creed focus]
- 4) Little Christ, little me [Baptism focus]
- 5) How our hearts and mouths align [Confession and Forgiveness focus]
- 6) You are what you eat [Holy Communion focus]

Midweek Lent will have hymns, prayer, Scripture and a Bible Study format message with discussion question time.
We meet in the Church Sanctuary.

Holy Week & Easter will be the usual worship services



Lenten Study Material will be available, before Ash Wednesday, for all who wish to join.

Ash Wednesday will be a regular church service with Communion and imposition of ashes.

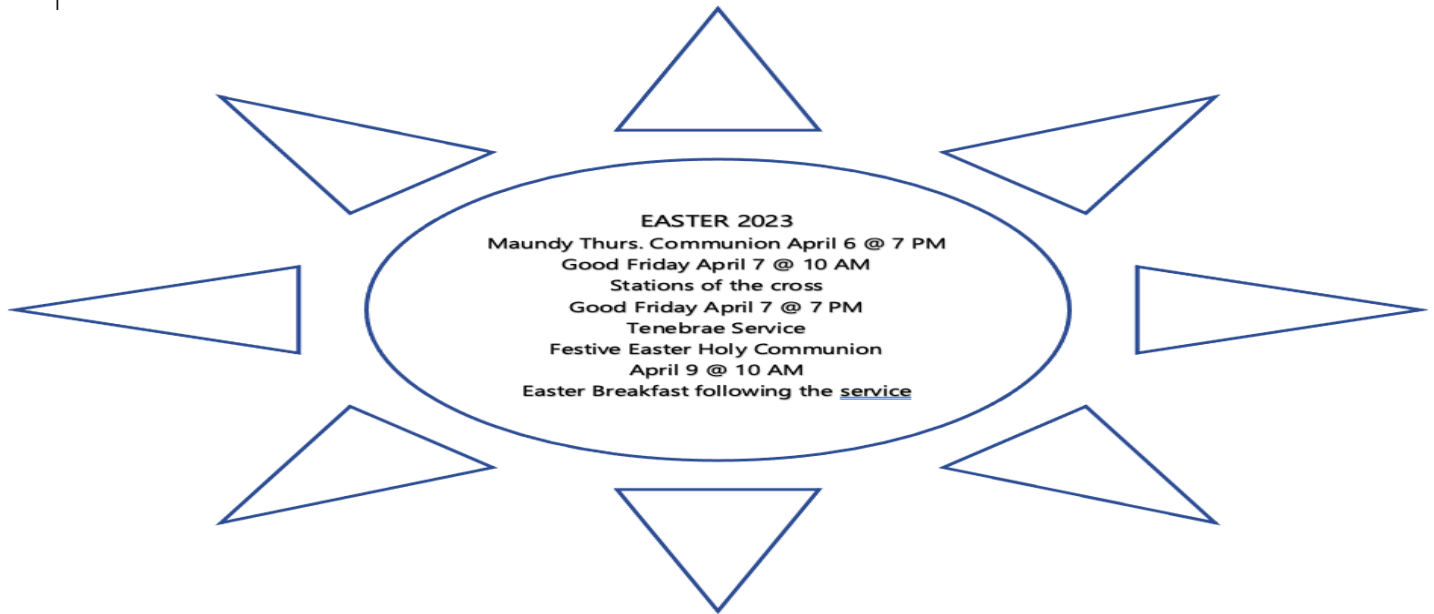
"Review & Renew" is a Bible Study which will be conducted by Pastor Todd in the church sanctuary the remaining Wednesdays of Lent

Holy Week will be regular church services.

Join the Fellowship Committee for a **"FREE DINNER"** every Wednesday of Lent,
at 6:00 p.m. before the **"Review & Renew"** Bible Study



Wednesday, February 22:	Praise and Pizza
Wednesday, March 1:	Chili at Church
Wednesday, March 8:	Praise and Pizza
Wednesday, March 15:	Soup & Salvation
Wednesday, March 22:	Praise and Pizza
Wednesday, March 29:	Praise and Pasta



Easter Colouring Contest

Colouring Sheets will be made available
in the Narthex starting

SUNDAY, MARCH 5TH.

All entries will be put on display.

The following categories:

- ❖ **SUNDAY SCHOOL**
- ❖ **CONFIRMAND AND YOUTH**
- ❖ **SOUL**
- ❖ **CONGREGATION**

Top winner from each category will
receive a gift card.

Winners will be announced at the Easter
Breakfast



Annual Easter Pancake Breakfast

Sunday, April 9th at 11 a.m.

(Immediately following Easter service)

Includes: pancakes, sausages, hot-cross buns, coffee and orange juice.

a free-will offering will be collected

It is the custom for the men of the congregation to do the cooking and serving, we are once again asking the gentlemen to sign up on forms in bulletin (*also on table in narthex*) for the time most convenient and place it in the offering basket or place in the envelope on the back bulletin board.

MARY MARTHA: *The following is our Mary Martha Schedule for our Winter/Spring program:*

- March 21: Quilt tying and stamp trimming
- April 18: Speaker-Jude Mersereau
- May 16: Bible Study--Pastor Todd (tentative)
- June 10: Potluck

Please feel free to attend any, or all, of our Tuesday night events!
(If you have any questions, call Lorraine at 905 964 5837)

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL: Mark your calendars for VBS. **In-person VBS** is being planned this summer **Monday, July 17 to Friday, July 21**. The program will run in the morning with an afternoon extended care for Grade 1-6. More information will be coming.

Last Sunday Attendance:		March 12th, 2023	Attn: 10 a.m. – 64	No SOUL	
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Weekly Need</u>	<u>Last Sunday</u>	<u>Year To Date</u>	<u>+ or – (--)</u>
Current:	297,841.00	5,840.02	3,739.00	46,197.27	(16,807.56)
LCC Missions	17,000.00	333.33	138.00	2,670.50	(925.65)
Property Improvement:			27.00	1,206.50	

MEMORIAL DONATIONS have been given in memory of John Mewhinney to Christ Lutheran Church by Fiona MacLeod, Erick & Deanna Albrecht, Glenn & Carole Pink, and David Honey. To Haiti Mixte Nazareth Feeding Program by Susan Honey. To SOUL by Anna Schneikhart and Don & Lois Fretz.

GREETERS: A sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board and we would ask that anyone who is interested in assisting for the coming year to please sign up. It is a wonderful opportunity to get to know everyone in the congregation.

HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED JOINING THE CHOIR? Do you like to sing? We could always use more voices and would give you a hearty welcome. We will continue practices each Monday evening from 7:30 – 9 pm approximately taking us into Holy Week in April. Speak to Carole if you might be interested.

CREATIVE MORNING PRAISE

Adapted from Lutheran Church of Australia creative Worship Services

THE 4TH SUNDAY IN LENT

March 19, 2023 + 10 AM worship

FIRST HYMN:

“Amazing Grace”

**Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost but now am found, was blind, but now, I see.**

**'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed**

**The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be, as long as life endures.**

**Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come.
T'was Grace that brought me safe thus far, and Grace will lead me home.**

Reprinted from: <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/amazinggrace.html>

SPOKEN MORNING PRAISE SCRIPTURE RESPONSES

Open up my lips O LORD!

And my mouth will sing praises to Your Name!

Come quickly to Help me, O Lord

And be speedy to keep me away from harm.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was then, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Praise to You, O Christ!

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Give glory to our God, our Light and our Life!

O Come, let us worship Him!

PSALM

**Sing out, sing out, all voices, shout to the Rock Who saves!
With thanks, bow down before Him, Come near and praise the Lord!
For He, our King has blest us; from mountain top and hill-side,
The heights and depths He fashioned, and we belong to Him.**

**Bow down, in faith, before Him, for He has made us all!
As sheep of the Great Shepherd, He feeds us as we go.
All praise to God the Father, All praise to God the Son,
And praise to God, the Spirit, Eternal Three in One!**

(Hymn version of Psalm 96; Tune: “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded” LSB # 449)

PSALM 99

[Easy to read version]

The Lord is King,

so let the nations shake with fear.

He sits as King above the Cherub angels,

so let the whole earth shake.

The Lord in Zion is great!

He is the great leader over all people.

Let all the nations praise your name.

Your name is great and awesome. Your name is holy.

You are the powerful King who loves justice.

You have made things right.

You have brought goodness and fairness to Jacob.

Praise the Lord our God,

and bow down before his footstool, for he is holy.

Moses and Aaron were some of his priests,

and Samuel was one of the men who called on his name.

They prayed to the Lord,

and he answered them.

God spoke from the tall cloud,

and they kept his commands and the law he gave them.

Lord our God, you answered their prayers.

You showed them that you are a forgiving God

and that you punish people for the evil they do.

Praise the Lord our God.

Bow down toward his holy mountain and worship him. The Lord our God is holy!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Bend down Your ear to our prayers, O Lord Jesus Christ, and come among us in Scripture and Sacrament. By Your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with Your Spirit, that we may see and believe more clearly. For You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

THE SCRIPTURES

The Old Testament: *Isaiah 7: 10-16*

For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor; I will gasp and pant. I will lay waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn the rivers into islands, and dry up the pools. And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them. They are turned back and utterly put to shame, who trust in carved idols, who say to metal images, "You are our gods." Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see! Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as my dedicated one, or blind as the servant of the LORD? He sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear. The LORD was pleased, for his righteousness' sake, to magnify his law and make it glorious. But this is a people plundered and looted; they are all of them trapped in holes and hidden in prisons; they have become plunder with none to rescue, spoil with none to say, "Restore!"

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Epistle: *Ephesians 5: 8-14*

[St. Paul writes:] For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CHOIR ANTHEM: *"Walk In The Light Of His Love"*

J. Martin

SUNG GOSPEL VERSE:

Tune LSB # 449

**What language shall I borrow, to thank You dearest Friend?
For this Your dying sorrow, Your pity without end?
Let me be Yours for-ev-er, and should I fainting prove;
Lord let me never, never, outlive Your dying love.**

"O Sacred Head Now Wounded"

The Holy Gospel: *St. John 9: 1-7, 13-17, 34-41*

The Holy Gospel, according to St. John, the 9th chapter:

Glory to You, O Lord.

As [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but 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." Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing... They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."... They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ!

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

GOSPEL SONG:

"Praise The One"

www.hymnary.org/LSB

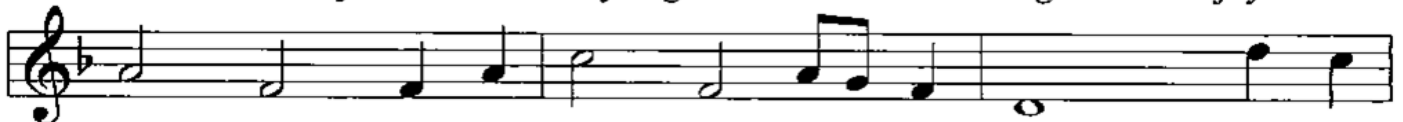
1 Praise the One who breaks the dark - ness With a lib - er -
 2 Praise the One who blessed the chil - dren With a strong, yet
 3 Let us praise the Word In - car - nate, Christ, who suf - fered



at - ing light; Praise the One who frees the pris - 'ners,
 gen - tle, word; Praise the One who drove out de - mons
 in our place. Je - sus died and rose vic - to - rious



Turn - ing blind - ness in - to sight. Praise the One who preached the
 With the pierc - ing, two - edged sword. Praise the One who brings cool
 That we may know God by grace. Let us sing for joy and



Gos - pel, Heal - ing ev - 'ry dread dis - ease, Calm - ing
 wa - ter To the des - ert's burn - ing sand; From this
 glad - ness, See - ing what our God has done; Let us



storms, and feed - ing thou - sands With the ver - y Bread of peace.
 Well comes liv - ing wa - ter, Quench - ing thirst in ev - 'ry land.
 praise the true Re - deem - er, Praise the One who makes us one.

Hymn accompaniment: 848

Text: Rusty Edwards, b. 1955

Tune: *The Sacred Harp*, Philadelphia, 1844

Text: © 1987 Hope Publishing Co.

Tune: Public domain

BEACH SPRING

87 87 D

Luke 4:16-21; Mark 10:13-16; John 1:1, 14, 29; 4:5-14

MESSAGE

SEASONAL PRAISE SONG:

"Magnificat"

LSB # 933

1 My soul re - joic - es, My spir - it voic - es—Sing the
 2 His arm now bar - ing, His strength de - clar - ing—Sing the

great-ness of the Lord! For God my Sav - ior Has shown me
 great-ness of the Lord! The proud He scat - ters, Their rule He

fa - vor—Sing the great - ness of the Lord! With praise and
 shat - ters—Sing the great - ness of the Lord! Op - pres - sion

bles - ing, Join in con - fess - ing God, who is
 hal - ted; The meek ex - alt - ed. Full are the

sole - ly Might - y and ho - ly— Oh, sing the
 hun - gry; Emp - ty, the wealth - y— Oh, sing the

great - ness of God the Lord! His ten - der mer - cy Shall rest se -
 great - ness of God the Lord! Here is the to - ken All that was

cure - ly On all who fear - Him, Love and re -
 spo - ken To A - br'am's off - spring God is ful -

vere Him—Oh, sing the great - ness of God the Lord!
 fill - ing—Oh, sing the great - ness of God the Lord!

Reprinted from: Hymnal Supplement '98 LCMS, © CPH 1998 with permission

THE OFFERING *is received.*

THE PRAYERS

Jesus Christ is the light of the world. Let us pray that His light may shine into the darkness of our world today. Heavenly Father: thank You for Jesus Christ Who brings sight to the blindness of human hearts and minds, and that when he illuminates our sin he also shines on us with his righteousness;

Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for people who are blinded to Christ because of ignorance or because of sin and shame. And we pray for those darkened crevices of our own lives we have kept shut to His truth and grace. Father, bring the Light of His Gospel to all people and places.

Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

Where people are in despair for whatever reason we, dear Father, that You would bring peace. Relieve the pressure on those who suffer for Your name.

Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

For the gift of divine peace and pardon, with all our hearts and all of our minds,

Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

For the One Holy Christian Church, here and scattered throughout the world, and for the proclamation of the Gospel and the calling of all to faith and beckoning them to our doors for a life of worship,

Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

Bless the church and her mission work of Word and Sacrament ministry. Watch over all services where your people service You in their varied gifts and vocations. Uphold marriage and all who enter it and give all Lutheran Christian parents the determination and ability to bring up their children in their baptismal faith.

Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

For this nation, for His Gracious Majesty King Charles, for our Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, our federal and provincial government, for our cities and communities, for all Ministers of Parliament, for all industry and business, and for the common welfare of us all,

Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

For seasonable weather and for the fruitfulness of the earth, for protection from severe weather conditions, for aid and relief to those suffering from natural disaster;

Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

Give courage to those who are physically blind and support those who help them.

Give faith and strength to the sick and those who care for them. Provide for all in need, especially remembering before YouIncluding those known to us personally and whom we now name in our hearts...*(brief silence)*...

Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

We lift our eyes to You, O Lord God, merciful Father. Restore us and the world in which we live through the death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

LUTHER'S MORNING PRAYER:

I thank You, Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger. And I pray that You would keep me this day, also, from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe have no power over me. Amen.

CLOSING GREETING & BLESSING:

Let us praise the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit
+ be with you all. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN:

“When I Survey”

LSB Tune # 425

**When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.**

**Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood.**

**See from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?**

**Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.**

Words: Isaac Watts; 1707, public domain.

John 9:1-41
Blinded by the Light
March 19, 2023

It's easy to look without seeing. How many of us can go to the fridge, open the door, look for a specific item, there it is, in plain sight – But we can't see it!?

Some times our minds already think they know even if our eyes see something different.

The 4 Gospel accounts in Scripture bear witness To 4 different people encountering the ONE Christ in different ways. [Drawing with a towel to teach observing]

[Teaching contour drawing in Art classes.]

Watching and looking and seeing. People can see many things and make incorrect judgements.

Like if something bad happens, it's because someone sinned -- And the problem proves God's unleashed anger. This had been a common belief held by religion and culture.

It's totally false. Human problems are not equal to God getting even.

But this is why the disciples want to know "who's responsible" and "who's to blame" for this man's situation. Did it ever dawn on them how insulting it is to view a man blind from birth as a troublesome obstacle, a nuisance to be pushed out of the way? The man is a beggar.

The disciples are afflicted with a much more dangerous blindness. Jesus opens their eyes to the reality of human suffering. IT IS NOT because of God's punishment. Jesus instead meets suffering with mercy, compassion and healing. Jesus, the Light of the world, completing his mission of mercy work, Tells it plainly: It's not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God will be displayed for all to see & believe. It's not about who is wrong, But the amazing miraculous ways Jesus interacts with His people! Sight is a gift of creation. Jesus uses dirt from the ground, earth's dust-- from which He originally created Adam and all people. Dirt mixed with His divine spit, A holy water you might say, And rubs this mud over the blind man's eyes. The only Word spoken is Jesus' pointing him to the pool of Siloam. Mud and water are Earth's elements — here they heal the body and carry Jesus' healing power. The man goes, washes off the mud, and he sees!

This story isn't just about the replacement of blindness with human vision. It's about the struggle of light with darkness,

It's about the fight between good and evil, It's about overcoming all fear and hopelessness with holy sight and confidence in Jesus. This is also about overcoming our fears of people who are different from us and welcoming them into our faith communities. We need to recognize and be aware of accessibility and welcome as core practices of our faith so we can follow God's call -- inviting all people to participate actively in the grace and growth of our witnessing into all communities. Blind people are often ignored or not believed or viewed as unreliable witnesses.

This happens twice in this Gospel story. 1st when the guy's neighbours refuse to believe in his healing. 2nd when the religious leaders don't believe and call on the man's parents.

The person with the disability becomes invisible-nonexistent. This still happens all the time with many kinds of disabilities. Because a person is lacking in a certain area or life they're marginalized.

When the healed man boldly speaks up for himself He's seen as too pushy or aggressive.

The religious authorities in this story are afflicted with blindness of a similar kind. Unmoved by a miracle never seen from the dawn of creation, they remain fixated on a legal technicality.

This is a sabbath day. Saturday. Holy Day of rest. Jesus makes mud and that's doing work.

No one works on the Sabbath. Jesus then is labeled sinner and sinners can't perform miracles.

So, either the miracle didn't happen or it happened apart from Jesus. Though they have the testimony of the blind man who now sees; The testimony of those who knew him before and after the miracle and the testimony of his parents that he has been blind since birth.

None of that matters. He even glorifies God for this gift! When he can't be bullied, threatened or cajoled into changing his testimony, the religious authorities insult him, ridicule him and cast him out.

They are willingly and intentionally blind to facts that do not accord with their own view of reality. They cannot see the prophet, the Man from God, that this healed man now sees.

They cannot see the new life, the new man, the new creation that bears testimony to Man of God.

No one, as the saying goes, is more blind than he or she who chooses not to see. They have chosen power, rules, and boundaries over the truth and their eyes have grown dim.

[Common today about truth we want to match our minds] Even this man's own parents' distance themselves from him. They can talk about their blind son but not about their seeing son.

To see him, the enlightened son, means they have to tell the story. "We do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. They deny what they see. Fear does that.

Fear keeps us from seeing a larger reality, from living with a larger vision. So we live with tunnel

vision only seeing that one thing that we most fear. A common psychology term for this now is DENIALISM. Foolishness, ignorance, lack of experience, all can be taught and informed.

DENIALISM is a person's choice to deny reality as a way to avoid an uncomfortable truth.

In fact a person will only hear and see truth If it matches up with what they think they already know.

Blindness is not about the quality of our vision or the condition of our eyes. It is not about the darkness around us, But the darkness within us. How we see others, what we see in the world, the way we see life is less about the objects of our seeing and more about ourselves.

We do not see God, people, things, or circumstances as they are but as we are. Until our eyes are opened by Christ Which begins in our baptismal washing And lives on, with greater vision, with a life of faith Propelled by the Holy Spirit. [Cell phone pics as opposed to looking in a mirror.]

Without faith, seeing is just a projection of ourselves onto the world. What we see and how we see manifest our inner world. They reveal our fears, attachments, and deep beliefs. We can be blind to the things we should see, Maybe people who need us or our help Or blind to the change God is evoking within us we ignore. True seeing begins in the heart not the eyes. Recognizing our own fears, attachments, and beliefs that impair and muddy our viewpoint. Living in denial is living lies. It's dangerous because it can make a person easily manipulated. Attracted to authoritarian bullies who echo their prejudices, give them scapegoats to blame for their unhappiness and offer them simplistic solutions to complex problems. Living in denial makes us feel more important, bigger, stronger, smarter, more in control. Sometimes you and I are a lot like the blind man – alone in the world surrounded by people who don't care. People simply do not see what we see, or know what we know about God in our lives. Maybe we're the only ones who feel as though our eyes have been opened to by Jesus passing through our lives and giving us healing, renewal and life.

Sometimes we are also like the blind man's community. We think we know the faith and what Jesus does and doesn't do. We can't see how Jesus is doing something so unexpected, That He's at work in ways we think He can't or shouldn't or love people who don't fit our image of a Christian.

Sometimes, you have to be blind before you can see. Sometimes you need to unlearn everything you think you know before you can know truly. It isn't the blind man can see, it's that he's the only who can now see. The whole community is blind to this transformation. Only the man can see what Jesus has done for him. And no matter how many times, how many ways he tells the story of his own healing, the community around him just cannot understand or accept this new reality.

Then, when all is said and done, Jesus comes back to the man who sees. He who has died to himself, died to the old ways of seeing, Lives new to himself, to God, and to the world.

Blind religious leader's manipulation turns Jesus into a criminal, a liar, a sinner, a breaker of the law, condemned to death, blinded by the sins of the world. Jesus, Who meets us in the wilderness, finds us in the dark, who makes us alive with Living Water.... this One comes back and restores and fills us up with faith. Just as He returns to Jerusalem after taking His earthly ministry to every place in Israel's surrounding country. He returns and in doing so, sanctions all the work that has gone on before Him. He is the better sacrifice. His blood running down from the cross is the true Lamb. His whipped, sore, agonizing body is a sweeter offering than any animal or grain.

All who look upon Him and His cross with eyes of faith see the glory of God's Kingdom, Where our suffering is soothed in Jesus' suffering. Jesus comes to us and meets us again, fills us with a word of light and hope, when life makes us tired and sore. The blind man's story is our story.

We experience new life and renewal in Jesus who comes to us, creating something new and incredible inside us. When His Flesh and Blood sacrifices runs through our veins We see clearly what the people of the world need And the Gospel message we have to share by our living.

Even if we are met with stubborn blindness, the Gospel still leads.

And Jesus keeps coming back and coming back. Jesus keeps giving words of mercy and forgiveness, the light of God's word, the renewal of our faith in the Body of Christ.

Week after week, year after year. God's vision for us and His church is to start paying attention to the perspectives of people we often ignore, including people who wear the label "disability."

We need to create an environment where fear of differences is replaced by encouraging all people to share their gifts even when God calls some to lead us in ways that threaten the status quo. We need to stop insisting on barriers and labels like "spiritual blindness" and instead begin to see the man in John 9 and all of our neighbors as real people whose witness matters.

God calls us into a new way: working together, needing each other, being the body of Christ.

So that all people are drawn to see what we see.

Jesus Who is life and light.

Amen.