



Bringing Home the Word

Fourth Sunday of Lent (A)

March 22, 2020

To Live By Faith

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Our Lenten practices are transforming our hearts to receive the love of Jesus in his passion, death, and resurrection. Today's Gospel revolves around this theme of learning to live by faith. The apostles take for granted that the man's blindness is due to someone's sin. The Pharisees call the man a sinner, born in sin. In their self-righteousness they judge both the blind man and Jesus.

Jesus sees and judges differently. He asserts that the man's blindness was not due to a sin of his own or that of his parents and restores his sight.

He challenges the wise, educated, and insightful Pharisees by saying, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, 'We see,' so your sin remains" (John 9:41).

While they can see physically, they cannot see the simple truth that Jesus is the Son of God and has the authority to heal, even on the Sabbath. They are so blinded by their "fidelity to God"—which is really fidelity to their distorted interpretation of the traditions and regulations God gave them—that they cannot see his spirit of mercy. They fail to see with eyes of faith.

Being merciful like Jesus doesn't mean merely condemning blind legalism, it means showing God's love to those in need. First we need to see as God sees. Then we need to love others and to enlighten them with the truth. Jesus heals one man's blindness in the hope of opening the minds and hearts of the Pharisees—and us today. +

Sunday Readings

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6–7, 10–13a

God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance. The LORD looks into the heart.

Ephesians 5:8–14

Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them.

**John 9:1–41 or
John 9:1, 6–9, 13–17, 34–38**

Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind."

***While the Pharisees
can see physically,
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the simple truth
that Jesus is
the Son of God.***

A Word from Pope Francis

We can imagine what Joseph must have been thinking. How is it that the Son of God has no home? ...And those of us who do have a home, a roof over our heads, would also do well to ask: Why do these, our brothers and sisters, have no place to live?

—Meeting with the homeless,
September 24, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Are there people or groups I blindly judge? What is at the root of these judgments?
- To what truths am I blind? How can I work to open my heart to these truths this Lent?

Ways the Gospels Make Us Uncomfortable

By Kathy Coffey

It may be a shift to read the Gospels and feel discomfort. While the words and actions of Jesus enlighten, they're no escape hatch. Conflict, tension, and frustration still plague believers.

But we read the Gospels for one purpose: to know Jesus better—not for warm fuzzies, easy answers, or reinforcement of prejudices. Nor will we always encounter “Jesus, meek and mild.”

He who threatened the cozy assumptions of his contemporaries may have the same effect on us. If we rely on the wrong supports, like wealth (Luke 6:20, 24), prestige (Matthew 23:1–12), or religious rituals (Mark 2:27–28), he'll challenge us, too.

Jesus questioned many of the customs of his time—such as the subservient role of women and the authority of the Pharisees. “It is hard to believe [Jesus] was simply an early flower child who traipsed through the sunlit fields talking about lilies and love!” Nathan Mitchell writes in *Real Presence: The Work of Eucharist*. “Who would seek to arrest and execute such a sap?”

The Perils of Storytelling

We may be uncomfortable with the Gospels' storytelling if we want just the



facts. We might prefer a precise blueprint or spreadsheet to rambling, inconsistent stories. But if we compare the Bible to our own complex, difficult life stories, we grow more comfortable with its mixed genres. We find links where the larger story of God intersects with our personal lives.

So we reflect not only on Jesus' and the Hebrews' experience in the desert, but also on our own desert times. Wandering in the wilderness brings valuable insights we don't learn in secure kitchens.

As much as we enjoy the intriguing connections, storytelling has its shortcomings. It's unscientific, subject to interpretation, and sometimes wildly inaccurate. Two people who attended the same party might tell radically different accounts.

So, too, each Gospel writer has a different emphasis. Even within the Gospel of John, there are inconsistencies: “Jesus was deeply troubled” (13:21), but in the next chapter Jesus says, “Do not let your hearts be troubled” (14:1).

Those who enjoy stories listen beneath the words. Their primary interest is the meaning stories give our experiences. We don't read the Gospels primarily for scientific accuracy or historical fact but to follow Jesus better.

We read through the lens of a human

author who will sometimes shade, condense, or exaggerate. Sometimes we may also need to read biblical interpretation, but most important is our response. There's an old saying: the Gospel gives the chapter headings; we write the texts in our lives.

Too Good to Be True?

The Gospels have been misused to incite guilt. Some people may need that stern correction to luxuriating while others starve. But many hard-working people are simply trying to survive, raise families, and do their jobs while being as generous as possible with their time and treasure. They certainly don't need another guilt trip!

What we may find harder than guilt is the Gospels' insistence on how splendid we are. Jesus walked among the diseased, smelly, and sweaty, and assured them that even in poverty, mourning, or persecution, they were blessed. Mired in our own problems, do we struggle with *good* news?

Admittedly, the central message is hard to absorb. We, limited and flawed, are made in his divine image. Throughout the Gospels, the message recurs: You are not a slave. You are a friend and adopted child with an eternal inheritance—not condemned to futility or the finality of death. +



Lord, you are the Word of God that shows me what is good, right, and true. Make me a faithful witness to your Word.

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 23–28

Monday, Lenten Weekday:
Is 65:17–21 / Jn 4:43–54

Tuesday, Lenten Weekday:
Ez 47:1–9, 12 / Jn 5:1–16

Wednesday, The Annunciation
of the Lord: Is 7:10–14; 8:10 /
Heb 10:4–10 / Lk 1:26–38

Thursday, Lenten Weekday:
Ex 32:7–14 / Jn 5:31–47

Friday, Lenten Weekday:
Wis 2:1a, 12–22 / Jn 7:1–2, 10, 25–30

Saturday, Lenten Weekday:
Jer 11:18–20 / Jn 7:40–53

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