

Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

This past week, a young man who had been deployed to Iraq and later to Afghanistan, shared his story in group. He grew up in a church that was quite strict. We might refer to it as a fundamentalist church. As a young person and teenager he tried to do every thing according to the book and, to the laughter of the others in the group, he said he thought of being a preacher. He went into the Army and every thing changed. With all the violence and witnessing the innocent loss of life, he lost his belief in God. But now, some ten years later he says he has found a sense of spirituality, he feels that God is near. He came through the darkness to see God from a very different perspective.

The word today is pretty dynamic, there is a great deal of interaction within and among the people...the prophet of God and the sons of Jesse, the man unable to see and Jesus, the religious leaders, that same man, and all the people coming and going. This is how we come to understand and know God, to understand and know one another and our very selves.

There is something curious here at the beginning of the gospel lesson. Jesus tells his disciples that the reason that man was born blind is that the works of God might be seen, might be visible in him. In other words, this physical impairment is no mistake but an opportunity for this man, his parents, the people to know God on a deeper level in their lives. The blindness enabled them to see what they would not otherwise see. The tension between the darkness and the light in our lives, can lead to growth in being more the human being God intended us to be.

I think we can all agree that there is way too much darkness in this world of ours...the darkness that has compelled 6000 people last month to cross the Mediterranean Sea seeking a place to live...the darkness that has lead to a Great Wall being built on our southern border to keep people out...the darkness of famine that is claiming lives of so many adults and children in a number of African nations. And then, there is the mean-spirited political campaigns. Yet, as overwhelming as this darkness is to negotiate from day to day, light emerges in those countries willing to accept the migrants...light emerges in the sanctuary churches and cities of our nation...light emerges in the public figures who refuse to demean or personally attack an opponent.

In each of our lives there are also moments or periods of darkness...perhaps work related or family related. The darkness might be an illness or health issue that is not going away. Some of us are plagued with self doubt not able to see our own potential. We loose friends and loved ones to death and we struggle to trust and believe. And yet, in each situation there is the possibility of light through the support and encouragement of a friend or even a stranger. Within each human being, each community, there is a tremendous capacity for resiliency.

The darkness within that gospel event today is a driving force for the man born blind, for the religious leaders, and for the people. The darkness, or we might say, the confusion, lead the people to consider Jesus...to listen to Jesus...and for many, to come to belief in Jesus. In this lesson Jesus tells us, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Each Sunday we come here to be formed by the gospel word and we fervently participate in this Lenten

Season so we can see and know Jesus more clearly. He is the light that gives us hope and confidence as we negotiate a difficult world. Earlier in this same gospel Jesus said, "No follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness. No, he [and she] will possess the light of life" (8:12). When we go it alone we most often see only what is on the surface while God sees to the heart of things. In Jesus, God is inviting us to see with him. God partners with us so he can show us things below the surface, things that are deep, things that are genuine, things that are real. When Jesus asks us to forgive again and again, he is helping us see the possibility of goodness in that other person, to see the possibility of goodness in our very selves. In the process of giving life, we receive life in abundance and the world gets better. Or the world is moving in the direction it needs to move. Walking with Jesus, the soul is graced with the wisdom of God.

Coming together as a community to pray, to ponder the sacred word, and to receive Eucharist, we begin a new week with the light that is Christ Jesus.

St. Patrick's Breastplate

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

Presider: My friends, let us pray now for ourselves and for all who need to be seen with God's eyes. Our response: God of mercy, hear our prayer!

- 1. For the church and for all believers: May we be open to seeing and witnessing God's light in others /// as a penitent people // We pray ...**
- 2. For all who make peace with others /// as a penitent people // We pray ...**
- 3. For those who judge others without seeing their inner goodness /// as a penitent people // We pray ...**
- 4. For the elect and candidates for the Sacraments of Initiation /// as a penitent people // We pray ...**
- 5. For those individuals and communities affected by the Coronavirus, for caregivers, health care professionals, and first responders /// as a penitent people // We pray**
- 6. For courage in these turbulent times, for a concern and compassion to take care of our own health and to look out for the needs of one another /// as a penitent people // we pray ...**
- 7. For those who are in any kind of need, for those struggling with employment issues and having what they need to survive; for the sick, the dying and the grieving; / and for those who have died
_____ // We pray ...**

**The parish community would like to support you in prayer.
Please share with us your needs and intentions.**

**God of surprises, hear and answer our prayers. Though we may be blind to the good in others, help us to see and love them as you wish. Grant this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**