



# SAINT LUKE'S

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT  
YEAR A

1 SAMUEL 16:1-13

PSALM 23

EPHESIANS 5:8-14

JOHN 9:1-41

A SERMON BY THE REV. WILLIAM OGBURN

MARCH 26, 2017

Today we celebrate the fourth Sunday in Lent, sometimes known as Laetare Sunday. 'Laetare' comes from the introit<sup>1</sup> of mass appointed for this Sunday and means 'rejoice.' This is often marked by rose vestments and flowers. And today we will have a Simnel<sup>2</sup> cake at coffee hour to celebrate. These are reminder that there is still some loveliness...some relief and refreshment even in the midst of an austere and parched season of wandering in the wilderness of Lent. The Gospel lesson appointed for today is about a blind man whom Jesus heals on the Sabbath. This lesson is one of the longer and more complex lessons appointed for a Sunday. It's actually such a rich text of characters, themes, emotions, and assumptions that composer Edward Elgar<sup>3</sup> set this text in an exquisite Oratorio called "The Light of Life."<sup>4</sup>

The disciples ask Jesus who sinned, this man blind from birth or his parents? The disciples are working on the Biblical principle set forth in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy that God is not the source of evil or the bad things that happen to people. Naturally, the disciples decide that the blame must lie with some human. It's something we do all the time. We look for reasons. We look for someone or something to blame. And answering the question put to him, Jesus gives the most amazing response. He says, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him." Jesus, whom we believe "will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead"<sup>5</sup>...doesn't pass judgment. Everyone else throughout this Gospel lesson except Jesus and the man born blind is passing judgments left and right. 'This person must be a sinner.' 'This person follows the law.' 'This person worked on the Sabbath.' But

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o407MyBGVUc>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simnel\\_cake](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simnel_cake)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.elgar.org/2english.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtYQQW6U964>

<sup>5</sup> Nicene Creed

Jesus, who is the only one with the right to judge, says, “this happened so that God’s works might be revealed in him.” It’s not just that God’s work are revealed to him, but in him. This story of this man receiving his sight is over 2,000 years old and people are still understanding that this is Jesus who did this...Jesus who is the Light of the World ~ whose strength is God the Father.

The man born blind received a miracle. Jesus took mud and spittle and put it on the man’s eyes and told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. Jesus took the dirt from the earth...just like God in Genesis forming Adam - and recreates for this man sight. We might want to say that the miracle was that he received his sight, but if you were to ask the man what the miracle was, I’d bet that he would say the miracle was that his life was wholly transformed by the very life of Jesus. He would say that his knowing Jesus as the light of the world ~ and letting Jesus’ light shine in and through him was the miracle. A certain Bishop’s wife that I know has a saying: “Miracles are 99.9% up to God, but the .1% that’s up to you will cost you everything you are and everything you have.” This man was obedient when Jesus told him what to do ~ and he was healed. But it came at a cost. He was questioned by everyone; he was called a liar by the pharisees; he was abandoned by his parents; he was eventually driven out of town! Our willingness to be obedient to Jesus comes with costs. Our lives are no longer our own. And yet still this man knows he found the better part.

We all too easily get caught up in judging others. It’s easy to point out others’ faults ~ and sometimes we even temporarily feel better about

ourselves for having done so. The law is not going to save us. Legalism is not going to save us. We are all broken. And yet it is not in our perfection, but rather in our brokenness that we are saved. Through our weaknesses, our wounds, our shortcomings, our failures, Jesus says, ‘you are like this so that God’s works might be revealed through you.’ This is grace. We don’t have the power to rescue ourselves. When we recognize our own failings, we acknowledge that we can’t do it on our own ~ and that we trust in God’s all sufficient grace to love us anyway. And when we really begin to believe that, we can start living as a Godly people.

Paul tell us “Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light— for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.... “Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”<sup>6</sup>

As we continue our Lenten journey, may we continue to learn to die to self and to awaken in Christ ~ and may we ever seek his life-giving and transforming grace, that we may listen obediently to voice that calls and to follow where he leads.

Let us pray:

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us  
through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole  
human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearA\\_RCL/Lent/ALent4\\_RCL.html#nt1](http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearA_RCL/Lent/ALent4_RCL.html#nt1)

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simnel\\_cake](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simnel_cake)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.elgar.org/2english.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtYQQW6U964>

<sup>5</sup> Nicene Creed

infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us;  
unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and  
confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in  
your good time, all nations and [peoples] may serve you in  
harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ  
our Lord. *Amen.*<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 815





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