

Broken but not Forgotten

Sermon 4th Sunday of Lent, Year A, RCL

March 22, 2020

1 Samuel 16:1-13, Psalm 23, Ephesians 5:8-14, John 9:1-41

Fr. Brian Larsen Wells

Please Pray with me.

May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, our strength, and our redeemer. Amen.

Good morning, dear friends.

As Fr. Wes mentioned at the beginning of our Morning Prayer recording for today, this is not ideal situation. We worship today via phones and computers and TVs.

We are not built that way, are we my brothers and sisters. We are made for communion. We are made for relationships. We are made for touch and human contact. And this break in our common life is one to mourn over.

But let it not break us.

This threat of sickness which has filled so many of us with fear, both for ourselves and for those we love, let it not stop us from being courageous.

From sacrificing of ourselves for the good of our neighbor.

It may not be ideal, dear friends, but so little in life is. In this moment, God is opening our eyes to something we have never seen before.

Will we see it?

Not once in Scripture does God wait for the ideal moment, or people, or person. Instead, he works through and with broken things.

He works through broken people like us. In broken times like these. With insufficient resources and inadequate human preparation.

Our God is a God of miracles.

Take this dirt.

It is not rich black soil. If we were to plant something in this earth, it is unlikely that it would have the nutrients necessary to grow great trees or a beautiful harvest.

It is just top soil, mostly used up, good for nothing much more than weeds.

Yet it was dirt like this that Jesus Christ used to work one of the most wonderful miracles in all of Scripture.

The healing of a blind man. With nothing more than dirt like this. And a little spit.

In fact, the man himself was nothing very remarkable. His own people had written him off as a sinner, or, worse, the child of sinners. For why would God visit such adversity on anyone who was not a horrible sinner?

Whoa, that hits a little close to home, doesn't it? The rhetoric is already starting to fly that this virus is God's judgement of the world. My friends, if I were you, I would not designate myself the spokesperson for God in this way. It is a position that human beings far too often try to take from our Father, and I would prefer not to sit upon his throne.

I would rather stand in the presence of Jesus, and speak in His truth and his light.

And what Jesus does, over and over again, is take those who have been forgotten, those who have been despised, those who mourn or weep, those who are weak and poor and at the end of their rope, and show them that he has not forgotten them.

That he is with them and that he will help them.

That he can redeem any situation, and that his work is revealed in lifting up the lowly and making right that which is broken. Even through broken means.

So, it is not medicine that Christ puts in the eyes of the man born blind, but worthless top soil. Mixed with spit. Mud, and nothing more.

Broken means for a broken man. Forgotten materials to redeem a forgotten person.

And, once washed, with his sight restored, this man born blind once so reviled becomes the talk of the town.

We read of the miracle in seven verses. But for 34 more, we read of how this community reacted.

How people who saw this man every single day, and simply stepped over him, could not even believe it was the same man. Not because his appearance had changed, but because, in his brokenness and poverty, he had never before merited their attention.

How could God care for one such as this. It couldn't be that God would work a miracle in a man like that, dirty and blind and forgotten. It must be a trick. A different man altogether.

Surely, a blasphemer like Jesus, who allowed others to call Him the Messiah, could not possibly work such miracles.

And yet, it was so.

And this Jesus whom they reviled, was in fact the Messiah. The Savior of that man, and of the people of Israel, and of you and me.

He is the same Messiah today, even in the crisis we find ourselves in now. And he is looking for those whom he might redeem. The broken amongst us. The forgotten. The blind, waiting to see.

Will you see? Will you trust him? Even though the world has gone black, will you let him be the light for you?

I would like to close with poem that each day I grow to love more and more.

A Better Resurrection

By Christina Rossetti

I have no wit, no words, no tears;
My heart within me like a stone
Is numb'd too much for hopes or fears;

Look right, look left, I dwell alone;
I lift mine eyes, but dimm'd with grief
No everlasting hills I see;
My life is in the falling leaf:
O Jesus, quicken me.

My life is like a faded leaf,
My harvest dwindled to a husk:
Truly my life is void and brief
And tedious in the barren dusk;
My life is like a frozen thing,
No bud nor greenness can I see:
Yet rise it shall—the sap of Spring;
O Jesus, rise in me.

My life is like a broken bowl,
A broken bowl that cannot hold
One drop of water for my soul
Or cordial in the searching cold;
Cast in the fire the perish'd thing;
Melt and remould it, till it be
A royal cup for Him, my King:
O Jesus, drink of me.

A faded life, a broken bowl, a spot of dirt, the smallest and youngest son, a man with no sight, a people as soiled and fearful as we ourselves are, out of stuff like this our Heavenly Father chooses to work his miracles.

With you and me will he build his kingdom.

So, though we be separated physically, let us embrace the spiritual communion that Jesus Christ has bought for us with body and his

blood. Let us check in on one another, encourage one another, share with one another, love another, grow and disciple one another.

And, edified by this good work and empowered by God's Spirit, let us continue to reach out into our community, praying for our city and for our world, for men and women we know and for others whom we do not know. Be a neighbor in a time of crisis to those who need someone to talk to.

This may not be the ideal manner of worship and service, but, in truth it never is. Finally, we have this opportunity to recognize, perhaps for the first time in our lives, that worship never need to be ideal to be practiced in Spirit and in Truth.

So, with eyes freshly opened, let us rise with Christ. Let us allow him to fashion us into the very tool he may need for this hour and this time. Out of this broken bowl, oh Christ, fashion a royal cup, that we may be vessels of the life-giving water you wish to offer to a world in need.

Let us Pray.

Father Almighty, Discerner of hearts, you look beneath our outward appearance and see your image in each of us. Banish in us the blindness that prevents us from recognizing truth, so we may see the world through your eyes and with the compassion of Jesus Christ who redeems us. Amen.