

4th Sunday in Lent 3/22/20

(Celebrate) “Baptism is sometimes called enlightenment. The Gospel for this Sunday is the story of the man born blind healed by Christ. ‘I was blind, now I see,’ declares the man. In baptism God opens our eyes to see the truth of who we are: God’s beloved children. As David was anointed king of Israel, in baptism God anoints our head with oil, and calls us to bear witness to the light of Christ in our daily lives.”

Prayer:

Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ, and come among us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

Scriptures:

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Psalm 23

Ephesians 5:8-14

The Gospel: John 9:1-41

The Message: J.V.Trautwein

It was only a couple of months ago many of us were longing for spring to arrive. We have now received our wish; spring arrived this past week. The dark days of winter are now in our past. This week I saw a rabbit next to some blooming daffodils gathering dried grass for a nest. Some of the early blooming trees have already brightened the landscape. Temperatures are fluctuating giving us a glimpse as to what is ahead. The new life of spring is becoming very evident.

Life around us continues and the darkness of winter is being lifted. Tragically during the present human circumstances we may be blinded by our own fears and anxieties to the signs of new life. It may be extremely difficult to realize that life around us is experiencing the rebirth of spring while we are seemingly placed on hold. We may even be angry about the sacrifices we have to make and get caught up in the “woe is me” syndrome. Reality sometimes is a bitter pill but unless it is confronted and accepted for what it is it only festers and gets worse. Although the darkness of winter is lifting the darkness from within may overshadow the joy of new life around us.

This darkness must be recognized and cast out of our lives just like Paul states that the darkness of sin must be cast aside. We can do this when we heed his words “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but expose them.” When the thoughts or fruits of darkness are exposed then the light of being a child of God enlightens our lives. It is like going from winter to spring, death to life. “Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you”

Knowing that we may have to live through many more days and weeks of this crisis we do not have to see it as a death sentence but just look at nature and world around us and see its eternal wonders. One of my favorite folk songs of the 60’s was by Ray Repp, “Look Out Your Window.”

This song gives us a clue as to how to break through any darkness to the light of hope and promise. It stresses that we need not become blind to the joys and needs of life around us during this time of isolation. Just look out your window and everything comes alive. Therein is reality.

Look out your window See what you can see
Silence is broken By opening your door
Look out your window See if you can see
All the wonders of life You've never seen before

Spend just a moment to look out your window,
the glass is as clear as you want it to be
Life dawns a newness to all who are willing
to open their much more than their eyes when they see

Look out your window See what you can see
Silence is broken By opening your door

2nd verse:

Morning brings laughter to people of sorrow
And sorrow brings laughter to people aware
Life has awakened in shades of new meaning
For those who are searching and bother to care

3rd verse

Blossoms of color bloom outside your window
Colors of black, white, yellow and red
Can you imagine a world without color
Yet sometimes we live as though most shades are dead.

Jesus came to give light in darkness, hope in times of fear, comfort in times of despair, a loving presence in times of isolation and loneliness, and peace in times of stress and anxiety. As with the blind man in the gospel lesson, Jesus restores our sight in order to see the life and joy which we do have. This is the eternal message of God's love. The Psalmist gives us this assurance with these most beloved words,

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

³ He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.

Yes, there is light even in the gloom of today's crisis and we are to share this light as best we can. \

Offering:*

“We give thee but thine own, what-e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.”

Prayer:

Lord God of all creation, as the earth is beginning to spring forth with new life, grant us the promises of a renewed life even during this time of distress. Many in their service to their fellowman are particularly at risk. Therefore today we especially pray for all those who are sacrificing their well-being by administering to the sick and dying as well as those who are risking themselves in helping to provide for our daily needs. Keep them safe from harm and the endurance to carry forth their needed mission. Give us all the perseverance and patience to help end the spread of this dreaded disease. During this time we have the opportunity to spread the love which you have shown us by safely helping those who are in need.

Reach out and touch us with your blessing, We especially seek healing and comfort for , Pam Ash, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, Darrell Garrison, Al Honey, the John Family, John Kahl, Ray Lambert, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Nic Nelson, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Terre Ronas, Paul Sagal, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Tommy Shimer, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Randy Stephens, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering fear anxiety, pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen
((The Lord's Prayer)

.The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only come through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Hymn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfYskpC6O9g>

"Amazing Grace" Agne G

Postlude: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTfW-aM43m0>

"Look Out Your Window" Ray Repp (please delete any ads in the above links)

**You may send your offering directly to the church: Epiphany Lutheran Church, 9122 Sybert Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043.*