

The Blind Can See: trusting and putting our hand in the hand of Jesus brings us to the light

22 March 2020

Lent 4

Reading: John 9:1-41

Open the Bible to us in a fresh and exciting way

In Jesus name

Amen

Patrick lived in a remote village in Ireland. His brother Seamus with his family had emigrated to New York and one day Seamus phoned. “Patrick I don’t have long to live could you come and see me before I die.” “Of course,” Patrick said “I’ll come.” But he dreaded the journey. He had never been on a plane and the thought of navigating his way around the streets of New York filled him with terror. But he couldn’t let his brother down. Flying wasn’t that bad as long as he didn’t look out the window. But New York was something else. It was so full of people. Eventually he found his way to the subway. Eventually he even held the map up the right way and got on the first of the many trains that would hopefully take him to his brother. A short way in on the journey the unthinkable happened. The power went out. A total black out of the city. The subway had few backup lights and Patrick could feel himself start to panic. Here he was in the underground, in the dark, in a city of millions of people and he panicked. His breathing was speeding out of control. Then a voice beside him said. “Are you alright?” “No” was his immediate answer. And the stranger that Patrick could hardly see listened as he told his story. The stranger reached out his hand, “You can trust me. Here, take my hand and I will get you to your brother.” Patrick hesitated for a moment. Could he trust this stranger in the dark? Eventually he reached out his hand. What followed was like a dream. In the half darkness, this stranger led Patrick from train to train, up and down subway stairs, always offering reassuring words. After what seemed like hours the man brought him out into the light. After a short walk the man let go of his hand. “There,” he said, “there is your brother's house.” He was right Patrick recognised the house from photos his brother had sent him. He turned to the

man, “How can I ever thank you,” he said, “Don’t worry,” said the man, “I’m just pleased you have arrived safely.” But then Patrick asked “How is it that you could find your way in the dark when everyone else was lost? “Oh” said the stranger, “that’s easy for me, you see I’m blind.”

Today in our Gospel a blind man trusts Jesus. It is set up by John with deliberate irony. The man born blind can see Jesus for who he really is. The pharisees ought to see Jesus but are blind. Jesus leads the man who lived in darkness, the man who was born blind into the light. Just as the stranger lead Patrick into the light of day.

Today and in the days ahead all of us are facing coronavirus. We need to follow carefully the instructions of the health authorities who are working so hard to keep us safe. Here at church the Care Bears and clergy are regularly going to ring you to make sure you are okay and today we are trying to get our roll as up to date as possible, so nobody is missed out. After today the archbishops have decided there will be no services. So, we will organise a web-based service you can tune in to. We will have updates about this on our Facebook page. If you aren't on the web you might have a neighbour or relative who could bring a laptop or iPad or cell phone so you can watch the service at home.

While we can’t physically meet, we can still reach out and put our hand into our Saviour’s hand. This can calm the worst virus of all - the virus of fear or anxiety. I have three suggestions for doing this. Each of you have been given a palm cross. This is a tangible reminder of God’s great love for you - that God loves us so much that he sent Jesus, and nothing can separate us from that love. If you need comfort or guidance you can hold this cross close to you. Secondly each of you is being loaned a prayer book. I suggest we use the Family Prayer on page 188. The readings for each day will be posted on our Facebook page. When you are praying, you can know that everyone else at St Peter’s is praying too. You are not alone. Lastly but not least I recommend Psalm 91 for its great assurance in time of need.

We face a little time of darkness, but we know, like Patrick, a guide who comes alongside us in our time of need. Unlike Patrick we do know his name. He reaches out his hand and we can trust him to guide us, encourage us and bring us to the light. His hands are wounded with the scars of love. He will not let us go, he will not let us stumble, he will not leave us alone.

Thanks be to God.

Questions

What helps you put your hand into the hand of Jesus?

Prayer? Bible reading? Something else?

When in your life have you had to trust God and it worked out okay?

Read Psalm 23 and trace the movement from light to darkness to light again.

How has your life been like that?

How is this current crisis an opportunity to know the intimate presence of God more?