



TCH1

4th Sunday Lent Aiii - From Samuel 16, Ephesians 5, John 9

To See is to Hope

Today we learn Jesus is the one who can lead us to clear vision, and clear vision will lead us to hope
Fr David King – 22nd March 2020

Note: Please make sure you read through at least the Gospel Reading before reading this!

1. Welding

When I was a child, my father very nearly damaged his eyesight irreparably. He's a great 'DIY-er' and he tried to do some welding without the protective goggles (the silly billy).

- I remember one day creeping into his bedroom a few days after the accident. He was sat up in bed with huge patches over his eyes. He obviously hadn't heard me come in, so he just sat there silently, and I stood there looking at the huge bandages over his eyes.
- I was very young at the time, and it was very scary to see my Dad with no eyes, not being able to see at all. Sight is so crucial to most of us, and being able to see the people we love, and have them see us, is undoubtedly something we all take for granted.
 - Fortunately, I don't think he did too much permanent damage, as after a few weeks he was back to normal, though I think he learnt his lesson as I never saw him doing any welding without the goggles again.

2. The Blind Man

- The man in the Gospel reading moves from physical blindness to sight. But he also makes another (almost more important) journey, he moves from inner blindness to sight as well.
 - In fact, *that*, of course, is what the Gospel is really about. The outer healing reflects the inner healing, but it's the inner healing which really matters here.
- And the great thing is you can see the journey of this inner blindness to sight reflected in his words and in his relationship with Jesus...
 - First he just calls him "The man called Jesus". Then, a little later in the reading, when pressed, he goes further and says "He is a prophet". But then by the end of the Gospel reading he is saying "Lord I believe" and he is worshipping Jesus!
 - You can see clearly this journey he goes on! He moves from a place of not being able to see who Jesus is at all, to a place where he can clearly see who he is.

- But, as ever, John, who is writing all this, is not just concerned with the man's journey, John is concerned with our journey too. John is inviting us, his readers, to make the same journey. His whole Gospel, all twenty-one chapters of it, is designed to do for us, what this one encounter did for the blind man.
 - This one encounter with Jesus opened up the eyes of the blind man. He came to see who exactly Jesus was, and what that meant for his life. And in the same way John says to us that he specifically wrote his Gospel "that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name" (John 20.31)

3. Hope

- So, yes, this journey is for us to make too. We are being invited to see who Jesus really is and to reflect on what that means for our lives. But to stop there would be to miss the really good news in this Gospel. It is clear from the Gospel that seeing the real Jesus and his true identity has a *consequence*, and that consequence is hope. You see, the Pharisees and the crowds in this scene, have got something drastically wrong here. They think the world is some kind of moral slot machine where you put in a coin (either a good or bad one) and you get out a particular result (a reward or a punishment).
 - But Jesus specifically rejects their analysis of the situation. He states this is *not* how the world works, or how God works. And to prove it, he heals the blind man.
- We can take so much heart from this! We do not live in a moral slot machine. This is not how God works. What we see happening in the world is something way more mysterious, wonderful and hopeful. It seems that the chaos and misery of this present world is the raw material out of which the wise, just, loving God is making his new creation. The healing of the blind man is just one moment where the sometimes difficult reality of the world collides with God's desire to make all things new.
 - So what we get here is a sneak preview into Jesus' wider mission and plan; to renew all creation, to take everything that is not perfect, and make it new. That's what Jesus was about, bringing heaven down to earth, "thy kingdom come" was his prayer "on earth as it is in heaven"!
- In these Corona days, I think this Gospel reading can fill us with wonderful hope. This virus has not been sent by God, it is not a punishment, he does not delight in the destruction to life it is causing, it is just part of our beautiful yet unpredictable and fragile world, it is part of the chaotic raw material of creation. But Jesus' desire, wonderfully and clearly on display here, is not for us to suffer. His desire is to take this raw material and make something new out of it, and perhaps we can already see that happening in all the acts of love that surround us at the moment.
- There are many difficult days ahead, but this Gospel powerfully reminds us that we are all called to make that journey of blindness to sight, one of the most important journeys we will ever make. And when we do this, when we see Jesus for who he truly is, it will fill us, not with despair, but with hope, as seeing him, we also see his desire to take what is difficult from what surrounds us, and to redeem it, and to make it new. That is his desire. A desire we need to trust in now more than ever.

Jesus, open my eyes, that I may see who you truly are, and may know your desire for us