

# **South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges**

***Fourth Sunday of Lent - March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020***

## **Welcome & Announcements:**

Welcome to our service this morning – You all look great! A few Thank You are in order;

- Thank you for your prayers while Annette and I were in Cuba.
- Thank you for your leadership last Sunday in making a difficult decision.
- Thank you to those who led last Sunday's service; Tracey, Doug, Madeline, Charlene, Kristine and Christie.
- Thank you for those who orchestrated last Sunday's breakfast.
- For the next few weeks, we are connecting as a Faith Community by Email – Thank you for your determination and patience to make this new way of doing “Church” work. Feel free to pass along any information to your family, friends, and neighbours. Folks have been sending me emails to be added to the list – keep them coming. Others have called someone and shared the information over the phone. Others are mailing copies to those in Nursing homes. Others are dropping copies off in mailboxes. You can access this information at any time from [www.southbuxton.ca](http://www.southbuxton.ca) or [www.talbotstreet.ca](http://www.talbotstreet.ca)
- We are hosting a Conference Call for our Wednesday morning Faith Talks. If you are interested in joining us – send me your phone number. Faith Talk is Wednesday morning at 10 am. We will call you.
- Any suggestions you may have to help the process, please share with me by email at [southbuxtonpc@gmail.com](mailto:southbuxtonpc@gmail.com) or text or call at (519) 689-7555.
- Keep praying! There are a bunch of us who take a moment or two each evening at 7 pm to offer prayers (from home), for folks to know God is with us and may God keep us safe and healthy. You are welcome to join us.
- Please remember – WE are all in this together, and WE will prevail – God will provide.

## **Lighting of the Christ Candle:**

If you wish – grab a candle to use while we share these services. The flame of the Candle reminds us of the light of Christ that collects us as One in the Spirit. Thanks be to God.

## **Call to Worship:**

**Eric:** We gather to worship the One who is often called, “the Great I am.”

**People:** We are followers of the God in whom we live and move and have our being. We come together to recognize the life, movement, and worth of the God who is with and for each and all of us.

**Eric:** Come let us worship.

## **Prayer Of Confession:**

**Loving God, we confess we are afraid of what we do not understand. We cause great harm when we choose to ignore someone because they do not look, act, or think the way we do. We are afraid of the unknown only when we forget that God is always with us. The Lord is our shepherd, we will fear nothing. We will live as though forgiveness is for everyone. We confess we do not act in ways that show God's love to everyone. We create hierarchies and let our unconscious biases guide our decisions. Please forgive us...**

## **Words of Assurance:**

**Eric:** We will know we are loved as we seek to love others. We will live as though forgiveness is for everyone, including ourselves. In Jesus' Name, we are forgiven.

## **Gospel: John 9: 1 – 41 “Now I See”**

One day, when the disciples and Jesus were out for a walk, they saw a man who had been blind for his whole life. The disciples asked Jesus, “Rabbi, why was this man born blind? Was it because he sinned? Or did his parents sin instead?”

For the disciples, there were only two choices. But as usual, Jesus could see more than the obvious answers. He told them, “He didn't sin. His parents didn't sin either. This man was born blind to reveal the glory of God.”

Jesus spat on the dirt and made some mud. He spread the mud on the blind man's eyes and told him, “Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam.” The man did, and when he came back, he was able to see!

The man was happy. But the people around him were confused and unsettled. The man's neighbours asked, “This man can see? But the man we know has been a blind beggar all his life.” When the man insisted, he was the same person, they asked, “How were your eyes opened?”

He told them, “Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and told me to go wash in the pool. When I did that, I was able to see.”

The neighbours were still skeptical, so they brought the man before the Pharisees. When he told them what Jesus had done, some Pharisees were amazed. But other Pharisees said, “This man is not from God or he would not be breaking the law by healing people on the Sabbath.”

Then they called the man's parents and asked them, “Is this your son? Was he born blind? If he was, how can he now see?” The parents said, “He's our son, all right, but as for the rest, we don't know how it happened. Ask him yourself and see what he says.”

The Pharisees called the man a second time and asked if he thought Jesus was a sinner. He said, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. I know only one thing: I was blind, but now I see. I don't know where Jesus comes from. But what does it matter? He opened my eyes. If he did not come from God, he would not be able to do things like this.” At this, the Pharisees grew angry, and they threw the man out.

But Jesus went to look for the man. He asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” The man said, “Tell me who that is.” And Jesus answered, “The one you have seen, and the one who is speaking with you right now.” And the man said, “I believe.”

Jesus said, “I have come into the world to give sight to the blind, and to take away sight from those who think they see everything.” When the Pharisees wondered if they were blind, Jesus

answered, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. It is only because you think that you can see everything that your sin is still with you.”

**Reflection: “I Am Because We Are”**

It is easy to make assumptions. Could that be that we are challenged by those who are different than us? One of the lessons that Jesus gives us is that God loves all of us – regardless and especially of our differences.

In Jesus’ day people who had differences, especially what we might call disabilities, were not part of the community - mainly because they did not fit in with the norm of society. To add fire to the flame, religious authorities would find blame – if you are blind, it was because you sinned. Jesus tells his disciples, “*But because of his blindness, you will see God work a miracle for him.*” Jesus restores the blind man to the wider community.

We might think that once the blind man can see, that being restored to the community would be an easy acceptance as the community will see God’s blessing evident in it’s healing. Today’s story shares what happens to this man after he is healed. He is accused of never being blind in the first place – that he faked it all along. Then there is the disbelief that he could be healed, after all he had sinned to be blind in the first place. Even with the miracle of sight looking them in the face, their assumptions hold bigger than their belief in what God can do. People with differences challenge us as a society, and they still challenge our society in similar ways, as they did, before they became known for God’s blessing and influence in their lives.

In the man’s blindness, we imagine that all he can see is the darkness. What does a blind man see? This person born blind doesn’t lack vision at all. He testifies to the miraculous and surprising goodness of God. Once the blind man can see – it takes some time to recognize what is what – he sees the world in a new way – including the blessing he has just received.

Imagine what it would be like to be born blind and then for the first time in your life you can see. How would you walk? How much of your balance is based on other senses than your sense of sight? How would you recognize what is what, or who is who – you don’t know what a car looks like or what someone else looks like – You may only know people and things from their smell, or what they feel like from your touch, or maybe even the sound of their voice. But you have never seen them.

Jesus explains that this person is not broken because he is blind; WE are broken when we believe this man (or any person) is defined by their sins. Jesus took away the option to scapegoat this man. In response, with his sight restored, the man testifies again and again and balks at his critics' lack of faith when they've witnessed a miracle. He shrewdly sidesteps their interrogation. He immediately worships, as if he's been believing and seeking Christ his whole life. Jesus observes that the Pharisees, able-bodied as they are, have come to rely on their own ability rather than faith in God.

There is a philosophy derived from the Nguni Bantu people called "Ubuntu." Roughly translated it means, "I am, because we are." The spirit of this idea is that we share a common humanity. According to this idea, each individual depends on the community as a whole to understand the fullness of what it means to be fully human. Remember that our goodness and identity in Christ, is only complete as we recognize the inherent worth of even the most powerless or disregarded members of our community. We are not alone. We share in community and God travels with us throughout these Lenten journeys. Thanks be to God.

**Reflection Hymn: VU 371 "Open My Eyes, That I May..."**

- 1     Open my eyes, that I may see  
      glimpses of truth thou hast for me;  
      place in my hands the wonderful key  
      that shall unclasp and set me free.  
          Silently now I wait for thee,  
          ready, my God, thy will to see.  
          Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!
  
- 2     Open my ears, that I may hear  
      voices of truth thou sendest clear;  
      and while the wavenotes fall on my ear,  
      everything false will disappear.  
          Silently now I wait for thee,  
          ready, my God, thy will to see.  
          Open my ears, illumine me, Spirit divine!
  
- 3     Open my mouth, and let me bear  
      gladly the warm truth everywhere;  
      open my heart and let me prepare  
      love with thy children thus to share.  
          Silently now I wait for thee,  
          ready, my God, thy will to see.  
          Open my heart, illumine me, Spirit divine!

### **Offering:**

We might not be able to place our money into the offering plate, but we give of ourselves each Sunday as we also give our gifts of cash. God has given each of us wonderful gifts to share with others; the gift of prayer, the gift of thought, the gift of a call or the gift of checking in. Let us take a moment to consider the gifts we may offer today.

### **Offering Music:**

### **Offering Prayer:**

**In the name and in the spirit of Jesus, we bring our gifts to you, O God. Help us to give with them a ready mind, a willing spirit, and a joyful heart. Amen.**

### **Pastoral Prayer:**

*Let us pray:*

God our creator, our centre, our friend, we thank you for the blessings of life, for those who are dear to us, for those who have died, and for all who have helped and influenced us.

Most of all, we thank you for the faith that is in us, for our awareness of you, and our hope in you. Keep us, we pray, thankful, faithful, and hopeful until our lives shall end.

Be with those on our minds today; the doctors and nurses, the hospital and nursing home support staff, emergency personnel, store clerks, and shelf stockers – Keep them safe and healthy. Keep their families safe. We pray for Marjorie, Kevin, Donat, Joyce and Terry.

Be with each one of us as we struggle to stay at home. Be with those who have been laid off as their place of work is closed. Be with the vulnerable, as it may be hard to get help. Keep everyone calm and provide us with wisdom to do the right things at the right times.

Loving God, May your healing power flow into a world consumed by fear of sickness, of powerlessness, of pandemics, of incompetence. We ask your presence with us and within us, now and forever more, as we pray Jesus' prayer:

***Our Father, Who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven,  
Give us this day our daily bread, And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive  
those who trespass against us,  
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen."***

**Benediction:**

**Eric:** As we depart, may we carry the stories of courage, sight for the blind, and soil for the seedlings that were ignored or neglected. Carry with you the hope that we will see with our hearts and know that God is good, now and forever more.

**Chorus:**

**Go now in peace, never be afraid.  
God will go with you each hour of ev'ry day.  
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.  
Know He will guide you in all you do.**

**Go now in love, and show you believe.  
Reach out to others, so all the world can see.  
God will be there, watching from above.  
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.  
Amen, Amen, Amen.**