

The Still Point
A Time of Meditation and Reflection
The Fourth Sunday in Lent

... At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance...

T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*

Like a tent in the wilderness, God's table stands ready;

A place of sanctuary and safety, of hospitality and healing.

Come, all you who are tired and travel-stained, footsore and famished;

Come with your fellow travelers to find companionship and comfort.

Jesus waits to meet us here and welcome us in,

Offering rest and renewal, solace, and strength, for the journey still to come.

Opening Prayer

Lord, help us to see: to see what is eternally good and true, and having seen, to go on searching until we come to the joys of heaven. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Gospel

John 9:1-41

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know." They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is

not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” He said, “He is a prophet.” The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” His parents answered, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore, his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.” So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.” He answered, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” Then they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” The man answered, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out. Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him. Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.” Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not blind, are we?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.”

Poem: “Beyond Our Sight”

by Louis Ginsberg (b. 1895)

There is a light beyond each fence;
 There is a light behind each rose,
As if to the benighted sense
 Some hidden intimation glows.

What burning rumor lights the air?
 On every stem it glitters quick;
It uses every grass-blade there,
 As if it were the richest wick!

What glory blazes us a clue,
 As its authentic brilliance plays
Upon the earthly symbols to
 Our poor uncomprehending gaze?

Meditation

The healing of the man born blind tells a story of personal transformation through an encounter with Jesus. Like other stories in John's gospel, especially the woman at the well and the raising of Lazarus, this encounter and transformation operates powerfully on material, metaphorical and spiritual, and theological levels. The man born blind is actually healed; his physical sight is restored. Jesus dismisses the damaging notion that physical illness and disability is a result of sin. And the man's physical sight is the entry point into a profound and life-changing revelation: Jesus is the light and salvation of the world.

The poem offers us a moment to reflect on the glory hidden and revealed within and beyond the things of earth. This glory, we claim as Christians, dwells within the person of Jesus and is revealed not only in the transfiguration and on the cross, but in his healing and liberating encounters with all of us.

The healing of the blind man is more than a symbol; it is a sign that partakes of the truth it reveals. Like the man whose sight is restored, all of us can find our way to deeper meaning, freedom, and peace when we "see" Jesus.

Questions for Reflection

When have you seen something in a completely new way, as if your sight had been restored? Have you had an experience of seeing the glory hidden in the natural world, as it blazes forth for a moment? Have you had an experience of seeing the healing power of Jesus at work in your own life, or the life of someone you know?

The hymn "Amazing Grace" draws its most powerful images from this story and the story of the man with two sons. "I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see," is a simple and profound expression of our reconciliation with the holy one, and with the holy in all things. You might want to recall a moment when this hymn has been particularly meaningful to you.

Prayers

We bring before God someone whom we have met or remembered today

We bring to God someone who is hurting tonight and needs our prayer

We bring to God a troubled situation in our world

We bring to God, silently, someone whom we find hard to forgive or trust

We bring ourselves to God that we might grow in generosity of spirit, clarity of mind, and warmth of affection

We offer our thanks to God for the blessings in our lives

We name before God those who have died.

Gracious God, you hear all our prayers: those we speak aloud, those we hold in our hearts, and those prayers for which we have no words. Hear the prayers of your people, and grant them as may be best for us, for the sake of your holy name. **Amen.**

Accept our thanks for all you have done, O God. Our hands were empty, and you filled them.

May Christ's holy, healing, enabling Spirit be with us every step of the way, and be our guide as our road changes and turns, and the blessing of God our Creator, Redeemer and Giver of life be among us now and remain with us forever. **Amen.**

Reflections this month offered by: Rev'd Elizabeth Randall

The poems and meditations this season are the last from our Rector as she is retiring later this Spring. Thank you Mthr. Elizabeth for your years of wisdom, and insight.