**John 9:1-41 March 22, 2020**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes for the Gospel of John the 9th chapter here re-reading these words. “And his disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Assumptions. We all have them, and we’ve all heard the saying of what they make out of the people who make them. Assumptions can be made about many different things. Take for example a business that opens in a city. 2 years later the business closes. What’s the assumption? Well, obviously the business didn’t make enough money, the manager or owner wasn’t competent enough to run such a business, or very simply, the business was not what the people in that town wanted, and they made that clear by not going there. The reason for the business closing could be a various number of different things, but everyone who hears the story makes assumptions about why it closed. We all make assumptions. A team loses a game, we make the assumption that it was the coach’s fault, or the player’s fault, or that the referees were showing favoritism and that’s why the team lost. Someone doesn’t show up for an appointment. We make the assumption that they forgot, or they weren’t properly reminded, or even that they just frankly don’t care. Recently, in our own situation of quarantine and closure over COVID-19, you can start assuming that this is a punishment on our world for sin. An assumption that God is punishing us or that God doesn’t care. The problem with assumptions is that after a while we start to trust them as if they are facts. Soon we take our assumptions and turn them into concrete conclusions. We treat them as authoritative proof to answer some of life’s harder questions. And that’s when we get into trouble. But we are not alone. Throughout history people have made assumptions, some right and some wrong. Even the disciples of Jesus did, here in John chapter 9. The disciples and Jesus pass by a man born blind and the disciples make an assumption right on the spot. They ask Jesus, “Who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?” The assumption being that it had to be the result of either this man’s sin or his parent’s sin that led to him being born blind.

Because that’s how it works isn’t it? If you do bad, bad things will happen to you. If you do good, good things will come your way. That’s how the world works. Or so we think. And so do our neighbors, and our family members, and our co-workers and our friends. It seems even an unbeliever, someone who would go so far as to say that there is no God, would still in our day and age make a case for this cosmic moral structure known simply as: karma. Karma deals with all sorts of situations, it’s really more of a worldview when we think about it. It can apply to someone with great wealth, or to someone with nothing. Karma’s meaning lies in the simple saying of “What goes around, comes around.” Did something bad happen to you today? Well…did you do something bad to deserve it? That’s how karma works. Did something good happen to you? Well, you must be doing something, right. That’s karma. That’s our *assumption* of how the world works. And sadly, although many may think that it is a correct interpretation of how things happen in our world, it is completely and totally, wrong.

Because the criminal, who swindles millions of people out of their money, lives in a mansion, grows old, and dies without anyone ever knowing. The kindhearted woman who gives money to charity and lives a simple life, gets in a car accident and dies. Where’s the karma in that? Evil is rewarded and those who are “good” suffer. Where is the justice in that? What is karma’s answer? Sadly, karma cannot say anything except that the evil one perhaps had some good in them that was rewarded and the good, well, I guess they weren’t so good after all… But really that’s just making assumptions on their behavior. But if karma has no answer to life’s problems than what is the answer? And a better question, what is God’s answer to the question of who sinned?

The disciples come to Jesus with an assumption that a person’s sin would be responsible for this man’s affliction. And really what they are seeking is an answer as to why a man would be born without sight. It’s a question we ourselves ask of God when we know of family, friends, and even strangers who are born with diseases and other infirmities. We’re in the midst of asking that question in our own lives right now when it comes to a disease that is altering all of our lives in many and various ways. How could God allow COVID-19 to exist in the first place? How could a God who is so loving, afflict someone with such a terrible disease? What kind of terrible sin did they do to deserve this punishment?

The troubles of this life cause us to question God, and ask ourselves if He is the loving and caring God who takes care of us, or an evil and cruel taskmaster who smiles and delights in our torment here on Earth. We can’t help but assume we know the answer in those moments, but we really are failing to recognize God’s Will, something that was touched on in our last Midweek Lent Service. And when we look for an answer as to who is responsible for this man being blind, the answer lies in the nature of this world. At one time this world was perfect, it was created by God who is holy and perfect in every way and Adam and Eve were created and lived in perfection. They themselves were perfect, and there was no pain, suffering, or disease. Yet creation did not stay that way, Adam and Eve fell into the temptation of the serpent and fell into sin. Our world was changed, and it was all a result of sin. And so, this man was born sinful and unclean, into a sinful and fallen creation. Was this man’s parents to be blamed for his blindness? The answer is yes, but not in the way that the disciples thought or even we think. His grandparents of old, Adam and Eve are to blame for sin coming into this world, for creation being distorted and changed, and for calamity and destruction coming to a perfect creation. If Adam and Eve had not sinned this man would not have been born blind.

But before we start blaming Adam and Eve for all of the terrible atrocities that have ever happened, let’s be honest with ourselves, and ask if we would have done anything different in their situation. Because don’t we love power in our lives? Aren’t we drawn to the things that God tells us not to do, or see, or get involved in? Would we really have done anything different if we were in the same situation? The truth is, we would have done the same thing. We still today daily fall into the temptation to sin, even with all of our modern access to God’s Word and His Church. And our sin adds to the curse. Was this man sinful? The answer sadly is yes. He was sinful, his heart was inclined to sin, shrouded in darkness, both physically for he could not see, and spiritually for he was an enemy of God. None of us are righteous on our own or deserve any sort of special treatment based upon our own actions or the faithfulness of our parents or other relatives. For all of our parents are sinful, all the way back to our first parents Adam and Eve. None of us can make ourselves righteous. None of us can restore creation to its original state of perfection and take away the verdict of this world which is pain, destruction, death and disease. Even if we are spared from this present disease we can’t eradicate all sickness, and we can’t escape the deterioration of our bodies and our eventual death.

So what’s the assumption? Well, it wouldn’t be wrong to assume that if we stay in the darkness of sin that we will remain in that darkness for all eternity. But while this man was born into darkness, Jesus Christ comes to him and gives him light. He spits on the ground, creates mud, places it on his eyes and tells him to go wash the mud away. And he came back seeing. Miraculously he was healed of his blindness, not on account of anything he had done or said but by the grace of Jesus Christ. For Christ came to this world to restore a creation lost and fallen into sin. He came to right the wrongs of sin. That is why he tells John the Baptist that the evidence that He is the Son of God, the Savior that was promised to come, is the fact that those who are lame are walking, the mute can speak, the deaf can hear, *and the blind can see.* This blind man deserved nothing but death on account of his sin, Yet he is given sight, and more than that he is given new life because he is brought to faith by Jesus Christ. He is given more than just a physical miracle, Jesus provides for his soul as much as he does for his body. For at the end of John 9 we see this man come to faith in Jesus Christ, saying “Lord, I believe,” and worshipping Jesus.

Karma works under the assumption that if you do good things, good things will happen to you, but it all crumbles when something bad happens to someone who is supposedly doing “good things” their entire life. The truth is good comes to us as a result of the work of Jesus Christ. Good comes to us and we receive His goodness in one spectacular moment when He adopts us as His children in the waters of Holy Baptism. For he lifts us up and brings us out of darkness into his marvelous light. He, as Paul says in our epistle lesson this morning, exposes the shameful things that we speak and do in secret, and he makes them visible in his light. And just as this man was born blind and unable to see, we cannot see through the darkness of sin without the light of the world which is Jesus Christ. For as Jesus says, “As long as He is in the world He is the light of the world.” And he is still here. He is speaking to you in a different way, as churches all around the world are closed and activities are suspended, but the house is not the person, and He is still speaking to you this morning as you read these words, and as you have the unbelievable opportunity and privilege to hear other pastors preach from all around the world.

In one amazing moment of love he destroyed the darkness of sin for all people. The assumption would be that He would come and die only for those who had lived a good life so that they would be rewarded for their hard work. Karma would say that Christ’s death would only be for those who were good and who had earned it by their works. Even the Pharisees thought this way, claiming that salvation was theirs because of their father’s faithfulness and because of their own actions. Yet our assumptions are put to rest in the truth, that Christ came to die for sinners. That he came to redeem all people, of all time and He did when He died on the cross for the sins of the entire world. He died, for you. He gave himself, and his blood for you, not because you deserved it, not because you are a good person, not because in some strange cosmic way your ancestors won it for you. He came, and died for you, when you in no way deserved that love. And he gives to you forgiveness and salvation as a gift, because He is the Savior of the world and the light that shines into the blinding darkness of sin.

The assumption would be that this miracle would finally open the eyes of the Pharisees and show them for certain that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, but sadly that’s not what happens. This man, after being healed from his blindness, is immediately interrogated by the religious leaders in order to indict Jesus on grounds of breaking the laws of the Sabbath and to understand and debunk this supposed “miracle”. The more they went through the facts of what happened, the more confused they got, for as some of them said “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” They were divided. Some were working off of false assumptions. The truth divided the Pharisees and the Jews, even those in the crowds were confused at what it meant that Jesus came and was doing these miraculous things. That same confusion and division remains today, for there are still those who believe that salvation can come from yourself and not from Jesus Christ.

But let all assumptions be put to rest by God’s Word. For God’s Word reveals to us the Son of God Jesus Christ who came to a world blinded by its own works and blinded by the sin of a fallen creation. The Son of God who came, and who gave to them the light, for He himself is the light that shines through the darkness of sin. He remains that light. He is still in this world, working through His Word, and providing for our needs even in the midst of a pandemic. So today, in the midst of your isolation and quarantine, know that you aren’t alone, and put any assumptions to rest as you hear the truth of God’s Word.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.