

March 19, 2023
Fourth Sunday of Lent

Meditation: “The Salvation of Jesus”

There he sat, blind as a bat, begging for any morsel of food or spare change that people might cast his way so he could feed himself for another day. He'd been blind since the day he was born, a burden on his parents from that day forward. Without his sight, he couldn't work, couldn't provide for himself or for his aging parents. And so he sat, begging for survival.

People always want there to be an explanation for everything that happens. They speculated as to why he was blind. It was obvious to them that he was being punished by God, but they couldn't agree whether it was his offence, or his parent's offence that brought down the wrath of God on him.

He'd heard of this great teacher, healer, miracle worker called Jesus... he was blind, not deaf...and he wondered if one of the men having a conversation in front of him was he. He completely rejected the speculation about who had offended God, and instead stated that neither he nor his parents was the cause of his blindness. He wondered what such a man would look like, but then again, he wondered what anyone looked like.

And then he felt it. Oh sure, he'd heard one of the men spit, but he was surprised to feel the mud being spread across his eyes. What was going on?

I said I wanted to look at the human nature of Jesus this Lent, but this story makes it very difficult to ignore the divine nature of Christ. Remember Genesis, chapter 2, verse 7, “then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” Jesus had done nothing less than perform an act of creation, or at least he had completed an act of creation that had not been fully completed when the man had been born without sight. If that's not a divine act, I don't know what is.

But it was a case of salvation by salivation. The saving salve was created using the dust of the ground AND saliva. Only an embodied being creates saliva. Only an embodied being has a hand to apply the mud. Jesus is not only divine, but also fully human.

I hear you. He's really reaching to make a point about Jesus' human nature, but, first, what does gaining one's sight have to do with salvation? Actually, and my apologies to those of you in the study group who learned this last week, contrary to popular Christianity's focus on salvation being about getting into heaven in the afterlife, the biblical understandings of salvation are focused on this world. When we are captive, either physically or metaphorically, salvation is liberation. When we are in exile, salvation is to return home. When we are hungry, salvation is being fed. When we are close-hearted, salvation is to have our hearts opened. When we are estranged, from God or another person, salvation is to be reconciled. When we are infirm, salvation is to be healed. When we are lost, again, either actually or metaphorically, salvation is to find our way. When we are

blind, salvation is to gain our sight. Salvation is about healing or restoring what is wrong, here and now, in this life.

And, what does any of this have to do with us? Again, my apologies to those of you in the study group, as concerns changing the present realities of this world, to quote Augustine, "God without us will not, as we without God cannot." Back to Genesis, chapter 2, verse 15 this time, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it." God put Adam to work as steward of God's creation. I believe we humans, Adam, Jesus, you and I, all have a role to play in making creation actually be the way God imagined it could be, the way God yearns for it to be – with every living being living in harmony. I believe that we are called to follow in the way of Jesus, to live life as he lived life. I believe that the power of the Holy Spirit that enabled Jesus to live the life he lived, is also in us, enabling us. We are fully capable of living the same way that Jesus lived, if we choose to. Salvation is available for the taking. The question is, do we choose to accept it?