

A Service of Word and Prayer for the Family at Home

[L = Leader / R = Response / A = All]

CALLING TO GOD

L: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

R: Who has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. *(1 Peter 1:3)*

L: Let us draw near to God and give our hearts to the Lord.

R: For his mercy extends to all who fear him, from generation to generation. *(Luke 1:50)*

L: Hear us, O God, as we gather. Meet us in the throne room of our hearts and be our Lord and King.

R: Reveal your everlasting love. Teach us your holy ways. Humble our hearts. Forgive our many sins.

L: Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we confess to you that we are sinful by nature and have sinned against you and others by thought, word, and deed.

R: Therefore, we flee for refuge to your infinite mercy, seeking your grace and begging your forgiveness, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. *(A moment of silent confession)*

L: But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in faithfulness and love.

R: Yes, abounding in faithfulness and love! Amen *(Psalm 86:15)*

(Optional: if you have a candle, please light it now)

L: Jesus Christ is the Light of the World. **R: Whom no darkness can overcome!** *(John 1:5)*

L: Let us pray: Holy One, you give sight to the blind and life to those who trust in your Son. May the light of your Christ pierce through our blindness and open us to faith and life with you; **R: through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen**

LEARNING FROM THE WORD OF GOD

First Reading: Isaiah 42:14-21 *(May be read)*

Second Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14 *(May be read)*

Gospel Reading: John 9:1-41 *(Must be read)*

Discussion/Devotion *(Options: After the reading of the Gospel, the discussion questions found on the devotional sheet may be used OR the devotion may be read OR the Leader may speak from their heart on the Lessons)*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Prayers

L: Heavenly Father, kind and good, hear our prayer. / **R: Heavenly Father, hear our prayer. (HFHOP)**

L: We pray for faith in the midst of these troubling times that we may always put our trust in you. / **HFHOP.**

L: We pray for safety in our homes and among our family and friends. / **HFHOP.**

- L: We pray for national leaders to do all they can to help the nation and its people at all times. / **HFHOP.**
- L: We pray for our doctors, nurses, medical and hospital personnel that they may find strength and courage to be with the sick and dying and give them their very best care. / **HFHOP.**
- L: We pray for those working at our jails and prisons and for all inmates, that they may be kept safe from viral infection. / **HFHOP.**
- L: We pray for those who must remain at their public duties, those who must work long hours, those who must leave their families behind so that we may continue to receive food and electricity and sanitation and all things needful for our daily life. / **HFHOP.**
- L: We pray for parents caring for young children and those caring for elderly parents that they may not be overwhelmed by the demands of their caregiving. / **HFHOP.**
- L: We pray for those who have lost their jobs or will lose them soon, that they may be provided their daily bread and not lose heart. / **HFHOP.**
- L: We pray for all nations around the world that the virus dies out among them, their leaders rule well, and all hearts prayerfully turn to you for their help and hope in life. / **HFHOP.**
- L: We pray for all churches around the world that they may be examples of enduring faith and patient, practical love as they work in their communities in the weeks ahead. / **HFHOP.**
- L: We pray for Bible Lutheran and all our brothers and sisters in Christ that we may take care of one another with loving deeds and encouraging words. / **HFHOP.**
- L: We pray for grace to use our isolation time as sabbath rest from all the distractions of this modern life and to spend more time in Scripture reading, meditation, and prayer with you. / **HFHOP.**
- L: We pray for those who have contracted the virus, that their lives may be spared from death. / **HFHOP.**
- L: We pray for those who have lost loved ones to the virus, that they may find comfort in you. / **HFHOP.**
- L: We pray for all those who are struggling with anxiety and depression and fear in the time of this pandemic and we pray for those whose needs we share from our hearts: / ***silent prayers or shared prayers.***
- L: We pray to you, heavenly Father, with thanksgiving for all your gifts, knowing that you always hear us for Christ's sake; **R: And in the name of Jesus we are bold to pray:**

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, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Life Offering (Optional. Sung: "The Doxology")

Praise God from whom all blessings flow / For all his gifts on us bestowed
To serve the Lord my daily goal / With all my heart, mind, strength and soul

Benediction

- L: The Lord God keep us in his care. **R: Keep us safe, everywhere.**
- L: The Lord God bless us from above. **R: Send his blessings down in love.**
- L: The Lord God grant us his grace. **R: Enfold us tight in his embrace.**

Dismissal

- L: As for me and my house.... **R: We will serve the Lord!** (*Joshua 24:15*)

HOW TO PREPARE

- A. Items needed: Worship Sheet, Bible or Bible Sheet, Candle & Lighter (optional).
- B. Someone will need to serve in the LEADER role.** They should:
1. Gather the items and determine the place for worship. Print enough copies for everyone.
 2. Mark, assign, and/or read the Bible readings. The Gospel *must be* read; the others *may be* read.
 3. Lead the discussion questions or read the devotion.
 4. Ask for prayer requests and offer petitions for the requests if desired.
 5. Lead the offering song or find someone who is willing to do so (optional).
- C. The discussion questions (optional) are intended to give everyone a chance to share what God's Word has raised up in their hearts/minds.
- D. A devotion (optional) is provided and may be read by the leader OR someone else OR the leader may offer their own devotion "from the heart".
- E. For mature groups, the scripted prayers may be skipped and each individual offer up their own petitions in a Circle Prayer.
- F. Children might be included by lighting the candle, reading a lesson, sharing their prayer requests, sharing their answers to the questions if used.

LESSON QUESTIONS – JOHN 9:1-41

- Q1? Imagine if you went blind. What do you think would be the hardest thing to adapt to?
- Q2? Imagine if you were blind and Jesus opened your eyes to see. What do you think would be the most amazing thing about your new sight?
- Q3? Is it easy or hard to see the "spiritual things of God" in your life? If hard, why?
- Q4? How can/does Jesus help you to "see God" more clearly?
- Q5? Have you ever shared your faith and helped open someone else's "spiritual eyes"? Share...

Devotion for March 22, 2020

Dear Saints of God,

The gospel lesson is a beautiful story about our Lord's mercy as he gives sight to a man born blind. Even now modern medicine is just beginning to learn how this might be done, so the miracle truly points to the divine nature and ministry of Jesus Christ. And that's a good place for us to start in the midst of this pandemic: God's mercy has been at work in the world in Jesus Christ long before the Coronavirus ever showed up. Though the virus has cast a sudden, dark shadow on the land, ***let us not forget that the light of God's loving care for us is shining as strongly as ever in the Lord.***

Put yourself in the shoes of the man born blind and feel his wonder and gratitude for his new life. While blind, he was a nobody, most likely a beggar for his daily bread, and his world was very small and limited. Now he can see and walk freely, and people are paying attention to him in a way they never have before. No doubt it felt as if his world was enlarged a hundred times over. When we receive blessings from others, those blessings can make a big difference in our lives. Now that we are "socially isolating" ourselves, our worlds may feel as if they are getting smaller, and we may start feeling as if life is getting "cramped and stuffy". To counteract this anxiety, may I recommend that this is a good time for each of us individually, and for families as a whole, to take the time to ***count our blessings from the Lord.*** Fear is a powerful emotion that can prevent us from resting in the grace of God. Its poisonous strength comes from diverting our attention from what we know is good and godly and true, to focusing on "lurking dangers" and our own anxious feelings. The best antidote for fear and anxiety is to prayerfully focus again on the merciful care of a Loving God. Counting your blessings is a good way to refocus your faith on the Lord. Make a "Blessings" list and keep adding to it as the days go by. Every morning and evening thank God for your blessings. For as we read in Lamentations 3:

²² The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;

²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

²⁴ "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."

I want you to also notice one last thing in our text. The disciples asked: ***"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"*** The Pharisees also wanted to pin blame on someone as well. Jesus, of course, doesn't go there, does he. He plainly says that the blind man's condition is not due to sin, but ***"that the works of God might be displayed in him."*** Right now there is a lot of "political posturing" and "blame-full blather" going on in the social media. Don't listen to it. Don't give yourself over to the blame game, or conspiracy theories, or "end of the world" preachers. The work of God in this pandemic will only be known after he has accomplished what his righteous will has determined to do. In Romans 11, St. Paul writes:

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴ "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"

What we all should recognize in this unique, world moment is that something great is afoot and the Living God is at work among us. Don't be a "know it all" Pharisee talking trash to others. Rather, open your spiritual eyes to the works of God's mercy that will be popping up all over the place in the weeks ahead. This pandemic may open the hearts of many to God in a way that they have not been open in a long time. If someone wants to bless you, let them bless you as if they were the very hand of God. And if you can be a blessing to someone else, let God use you to work his works of mercy. We are, after all, the Body of Christ, his hands and feet.

Summing this up: the God of all mercy is a real and living God, his work continues among us in judgment and mercy, so take stock of your life and rest yourself in his mercy. Yours in faith, hope and love. Pastor Dave