

## **Lent 4 - A - 1a**

1 Sm 16:1b,6-7,10-13a; Eph 5:8-14; Jn 9:1-41 (LONG)

Have you ever wondered what you did that was so wrong that God is punishing you? Kind of a common thought, and people are angered at God all the time because of this. We even have a hard time thanking God for the good things - thinking we deserve a pat on the back for them, and get upset with God for the bad things that happen. We think we see clearly the causes of the good and bad, but really we are not seeing as clearly as we think.

In the Gospel we see this man who was born blind. The people who bring him to Jesus ask an interesting question: *Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?* You see, they just assume that the blindness is a punishment from God - the only question was who messed up. They seem to have no idea what he did that was so bad and they start looking for someone else to blame. They are confused. What the heck did he do that was so wrong? Why is God punishing him? Why would God let this happen? That last question may have crossed our minds many times - why did God let this happen? However, their biggest problem - and ours too - was their assuming that God was responsible for a bad thing in the first place. God does not cause evil or bad things to happen, God only does good. So how do we get mad at God when something bad happens.

Maybe we get mad because we think that God is like us. We look at people and keep track of the things they do that are wrong, and we decide how to punish them - so doesn't God? We have this idea put in us as children that if you do good then you deserve to have only good things will happen to you, and if you do bad you should have bad things happen to you in punishment. Funniest thing is that in reality it doesn't work that way in the world a lot of the time, and we generally don't even follow that in the way we deal with people. People do bad and seem to get away with it, people are good and they get sick or taken advantage of. We think that God does not intervene as we think God should - yet we have such narrow vision.

But God sees things differently. We heard in the first reading: *Not as [humans] see does God see, because [people] see the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart.* God doesn't just look at the behavior and either reward or punish in this world like we think an ideal human should. God's vision goes beyond this temporary world that we put such importance on, God looks to bring all to eternal happiness. God looks into the person's heart and judges not just on

behaviors, but on the whole inner character of the person - yet God doesn't just dole out rewards and punishments like we might if we were in the same place. God calls the individual *during* all the events that happen as part of life and urges them to approach for forgiveness, to turn from sin and darkness, and share in God's Goodness. God does not just manipulate the conditions of the world and the forces of health and nature to align with our human sense of justice.

Some times bad things just happen to people regardless of how good they are. We hear Jesus say in Luke's Gospel: *Those 18 on whom the tower in Siloam fell, killing them—do you think that they had greater guilt than all other men who live in Jerusalem? No, I tell you.* Some bad things just happen - it's no one's fault. Some other bad things can happen as a result of our sins - if we do sinful things, often it leads to bad things happening in our lives. The bad things that happened to the blind man were not a result of his evil heart, nor was it because of what God did to him - Jesus shows that this is not even the question we should be focusing on. Jesus heals the blind man out of concern for him, and also to teach us an important lesson - that he is the *light of the world*. We see that after approaching and being touched by Jesus, and doing a simple thing he asks (sounds like going to confession), the man can see. His eyes are opened to the reality of the light that was standing there all the time in the midst of his suffering.

Darkness is not a thing in itself, it is a lack of something. Light, however, is a thing and it can be added to a dark place to change it. Sin is a lack of something in our lives. When we sin we turn out some of the light of God's goodness in our lives. Jesus says as he cures the blind man: *I am the light of the world*. To keep ourselves from the dark, we have to turn to the light - this is why we hear in the second reading: *Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness*. We can't control the bad things that happen for no one's fault, but we can keep bringing the light of Christ to take the place of the bad things that sin creates. In healing the blind man Jesus tells us to forget trying to figure out the cause of bad things - just going to get you discouraged, but rather, turn towards the light that is Jesus and just come to him (as we have a chance to do in the Eucharist and Confession). Then we too can live out the charge we heard in the second reading to be *the light of the world* ourselves. Today we are challenged to stop looking for solutions through the human wisdom that sets up a specific ideal for God to follow, and come in faith to Jesus. We must accept the light of God in our hearts so that we can reflect this light into a world discouraged because of evil. As we heard today: *Awake, ... and Christ will give you light*.