

## Xc JOHN 9 1-41

I like to call this week Gospel “Mercy and Hope.” The symbolism in John’s Gospel is vast and we would need hours just to go through all that we heard and what deeper meaning it has. So, I will give you a few short thoughts.

First, in the time of Christ, the pool of Siloam was a place of ritual washing. Not just your hands or face, but your entire body would be washed to become clean not just from dirt but, symbolically, from daily sin. The Law called for you to wash before you enter the Temple area. Washing away sin... does that sound familiar?

Second, during the Feast of the Tabernacle, the pool of Siloam was also the only place that the water that was used in the temple ritual was taken. At the Feast of the Tabernacle the Jews prayed for the return of God to the Temple.

We have Jesus using the water from the pool during the Feast of the Tabernacle on the High Holy Day of the week. Jesus is God returning to the Temple during the feast. That is what the feast was all about.

The last major piece of inside information we can review is the fact that the Sadducees were unable to understand the difference between God resting on the seventh day and God not doing anything on the seventh day. If God took off on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, there would be no one here! We, as Christians, believe that all creation is held together by the hand of God... and still is. Jesus, who is God, was doing his Father’s work. That is the Mercy which gives hope for all people.

Jesus has such mercy on the blind man that, just like in the creation of Adam, the clay from the ground is used to create not physical life, but a new spiritual life for the blind man. The man washes in the pool of Siloam which is a symbol of God returning to his people again in love and mercy. Jesus asks nothing of man except that, at the end, that he believes in the Son of God, and, as we know, he does. The greatest gift the man receives is faith... and now he has hope.

Jesus performs this sign for all of us to believe not because of the sign, but because of the word that we hear. How many times in our lives does God show us mercy and love and we did not know it? How many times has God walked with us during bad times and good. How do we know this? Because we have heard the Word of the Father through the Gospel, and through what we have seen.

I am blessed by the fact that, as a convert to Christianity, I unique advantage of remembering my conversion and my Baptism. And one of the greatest gifts I have received is to be able to see all the wonders that are out there that others may miss because they walk too fast or refuse to listen and look.

I have seen children jump for joy because of your generosity. Nothing in this world looks or sounds so perfect to me than the laughter and peace of a child. Through the generosity of the parishes of Most Holy Redeemer and our Religious Education Program, we used to be able to bring Easter packages to Manner House before they closed. When you would see the face of a child that has known nothing but abuse, receive a simple gift from someone expecting nothing in return, you can also see the face of Mercy and Hope upon the crying mother, who, maybe for the

first time in years, understands that there are good people out there. Because the Gift is so much more than the few pieces of chocolate or the stuffed bunny. It is the Mercy from God that is also delivered. And you are the ones who made it possible. As Christ teaches us we too must teach others.

One year when I was playing one of Santa's helpers there was a young man who did not want to go to school because his older brother, who had special needs, would miss him. You see, the younger brother took care of the older brother. The older brother looked upon his younger brother as his whole world. I walked into a house full of tears and screaming and crying by everyone.

The younger brother just wouldn't leave his older brother and go to school. Then, everything changed when the older brother walked up solemnly to his little brother and said, "Go to school like I do every day and I will see you when you get home. I will talk to you on the phone like we do now. It will be ok." Then I saw the Mercy and Hope of Christ was there. There is no age, or ability or social standing that stops God's Mercy and Hope.

O once stopped and talked to the preacher on 34<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Ave in New York City. He said he sees Christ every time someone stops for a minute and listens to him. He said he may not save every soul but if he saves one then he did good.

For me I see God's Mercy and Hope all the time. All we need to do is stop for a second and be willing to open our heart and mind. If you do, you'll see that it's there and sometime you will not realize it until much later.

Are we that different than the blind man in the Gospel... not that we are blind in sight but wanting in hope. Lent allows us the opportunity to open our heart to look deep inside ourselves and ask the question: who am I? Personally, I never like what I see because I know I could do better. I know that God's love and mercy are there for me, but sometimes I let things get in the way. That makes me human, and it is not an excuse but a fact. I need to work on that fact. Not the human side, but on those things that keep me away from doing what is right. Lent is a time for us to look inside and change what needs to be changed.

The blind man received a gift of Mercy, Hope and Reconciliation from Jesus. He recognizes Christ as the Messiah and Lord and worships him. The gift of Faith, which the blind man got, is one we can all receive if we are willing to open up our hearts and look as the blind man did.