

Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year A, March 22, 2020
John 9: 1-41,

Since the dawn of time, people have asked questions. From day one we are seekers of why or why not, “Are we there yet,” “How does that work,” or “Why do I have to eat brussel sprouts?” Do you know that among the most vexing questions children ask about God are, “Does God have a beard?” That may lead us to the next question, “Is that God up there?” Or “If God is everywhere, why do we have to go to church to see God?” best asked as a child is getting ready to go to church. When it comes to questions that challenge our faith, it is to God’s word we go to with a prayerful soul.

There are two types of questions that people ask. One type of question is asked by people who just want to hear themselves ask questions, but are not really interested in the answer. They tend not to be interested in learning, or growing in knowledge. The second type of questions asked are learning questions. Those who ask these questions are on a quest. They are genuine seekers of answers. When we ask questions of God we are seeking to grow our faith.

Read through our Gospel reading and count all the questions asked, by who and for what reasons. And who is listening to the answers. What were they learning about their faith and about God’s role in the world?

John spent a lot of time on this story, so we may think this story was important to him. John is reminding us about who writes the script of life, it is our God. Are we any different than the disciples who asked Jesus why the man was blind, when we ask who is to blame for the covid-19 virus. You notice Jesus did not answer them, directly. Rather the answer He gave was a reminder that we are part of nature and as such subject to how nature behaves. Viruses have come and gone over the history of the world. The second part of the answer is to worship God who walks with us, even as nature takes its course.

Virus will come again, like today, claiming so many lives. As people of faith we know about this kind of evil.

When asked how this man became blind, Jesus never answered the question. He set an example that the church has followed down through the ages. He ministered to a person in need. He reached out to him and in doing so brought him into God’s kingdom. In times like these, people watch to see how the church responds. Sometimes we just need to get mud on our hands and reach out to each in faith, knowing that being faithful people means doing God’s ministry, even in times like today.

What did Jesus do in the story? He revealed the presence of God in himself. Our faith is a revealed faith, a gift to us by God. There are times in our lives we are going to be placed in situations we never expected, like today. The man in the story was taken out of his normal way of life (could not beg for a living) and given a new way of life to see the world in a completely different perspective. In a sense he was taken out of a known way of life and brought into an unknown way of life, with its new questions, obstacles, and challenges. To him God was a new experience. And once he experienced God, he worshipped God, in the presence of Jesus. We too have been taken out of our normal existence and now have all kinds of new questions, obstacles and challenges to face.

In this new world, Jesus calls upon us not to be anxious. God has chosen to let nature and history take their course, as the man who was born blind. How many times did Jesus say to Thomas not to be anxious, but to be at peace in his soul (John 20:24-29). It is Jesus saying to us, God is with us on this new journey. Remember the words of the Psalmist who wrote, "I will fear no evil, for you are with me...". These words reveal to us what we can rely on from our God. This echoes our Christmas story where we celebrate Immanuel, "God with us." We ask where is God in our world today? God is with and walking alongside us. God is in solidarity with us, God has come to dwell with us. When Jesus came and dwelt with us he moved into our neighbourhood. God joined us in the midst of a world where evil and disease were to be found and became one of the victims of that evil and disease. Only a God that is willing to suffer with us, as God did through Jesus, His Son, our brother, can be a God who will be with us today and tomorrow. As John wrote, the Word became flesh. It is like the hymn we sing, "This is my Father's world, and let us never forget that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet."

Anxiety comes from asking the wrong question, what if? Rather, as Easter people, we ask, "Who is that God we worship?" Like the man who put his trust in Jesus, we worship Jesus, who told us so much about the character of God. As Jesus said so many times, if you have seen Him, you have seen our Father in Heaven.

In this new world, we are to seek after the kingdom of God. It means that as Jesus did, He cared for the man, He saw a child of God. The early church historian, Eusebius, wrote that in times of crisis, "the deeds of Christians were on everyone's lips."

I sometimes wonder why such a passage of scripture shows up, like John chapter nine, in a week like this week. Here is what I noticed.

Jesus never answered the question of who or why. God allows nature to take its course. But in doing so, God has promised to give us peace for our souls by being with us. We are not left alone in this world, we have God and our Community of Faith. And, we are still to worship God, even in the tough times as much as we do in the good times. It is a strange point, as Eusebius notes, that the church always comes through these crises stronger and actually grows.

Prayer is an important part of our spiritual life. It is said that the church marches on its knees. I would ask, that you keep this prayer close to your soul in the days to come.

A prayer during these time of COVID-19

O God, bring your presence into our lives. Allow your truth to open our souls to your wondrous love and remind us we are never alone on our journey of faith. Silence in our soul any other voice that is not your own. Let us turn the attention of our souls to you. Let us be assured and confident that you are with us and our neighbours in this changing world of yours. We come before you in prayer as your children of hope trusting in a hope that is not of this world. Our hope that supports us and soothes the anxieties of our souls is of your world.

Gracious God, fill us with compassion and concerns for our brothers and sisters as well as our neighbours.

Loving God, we place into your care our health care providers, those who are first responders, those who provide us with food, those who go to work and provide for us during these trying times. May they know of our great gratitude for all they are doing for us.

Caring God, we bring to our fears, our anxieties, and our doubts asking you to calm our souls. Remind us we are not alone in this world, assure us of your companionship and abiding love.

The Lord's Prayer:

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

Remind us Lord, that you hold each and everyone of us gently and loving in your constant love and care, we are your children. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen

Deuteronomy 31: 6

Be strong and of good courage, do not be afraid: for it is the Lord your God who goes with you, God will not fail you or forsake you.

Please feel ok to call me or email anytime you wish. Rev David LeBlanc

Phone: 902-639-9301 email: davidaleblanc1@gmail.com

OLD BARN ANNOUNCEMENTS

~~April 5th - CANCELLED - Sunday, 11:30-1:00pm, **PANCAKE BRUNCH** at Old Barns United Church (Fellowship Hall), \$10 Adult/ 7 & Under \$7. Live Entertainment by Highway 236. All proceeds to OBUC. Presented by OBUC Board of Stewards/Trustees and The Clifton 4-H Club.~~

HILDEN ANNOUNCEMENTS

~~Cards and Games Days - **CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**~~

~~March 20 at 1 am (afternoon snack)
Apr. 01 at 10 am (light lunch) April 17 at 1 pm (afternoon snack)~~

JOINT ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **Arimathea General Meeting** has been *postponed* until June 2nd, 7:30 p.m., at 8741 Hwy 224, Upper Musquodoboit.

Dear Folks,

We are looking for a person or persons to **join our *child care team*** for the Alkhalaf family. Tuesday and Thursday the parents, Saleh and Marya, attend ESL classes at 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. There are other times when they have appointments. The older 3 children are at school, but sometimes they need to be met as they get off the school bus stop at King Lam Restaurant a short walk to their house, and stay until parents arrive home. The preschoolers, Shamsa and Nabaa have been enjoying Maggies Place, Library, and outings to parks with our supervision. These kids all have great personalities and are rapidly learning to speak English. Your help will be greatly appreciated. Please contact **Nancy Emerson** at **902-305-4151** phone or text. *Thank you.*

Rev. David has planned a five week *study on dying and death*. Weather permitting we will meet on Thursdays. The Bible Study is offered at two different times (depending on interest) for we all have busy lives. The study will take place Thursday at 2:00 p.m. at Hilden United Church and 7:00 p.m. at Old Barns United Church. I would expect our time together to be no more than an hour and half.

CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

~~March 26th - A New World~~

~~April 2nd - We are an Easter people~~

Principles of the study: This may, at times be a difficult time for us. It will be ok to take time to be alone or silent. Please respect the privacy of what is shared. We would like this to be a safe space. Please feel free to express your feelings as you wish.

Please feel free to invite friends and/or family members. All are welcome.

Rev. David LeBlanc

davidaleblanc1@gmail.com

902-639-9301

Lectionary Readings for Next Week - March 29nd - Fifth Sunday in Lent

Scriptures: Ezekiel 37:1-14
Psalm 130
Romans 8:6-11
John 11:1-45

Message:

Worship Services - SERVICES CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE-

Sermons and announcements posted on website under NEWS tab and Bulletins

~~Mar 22~~ 9:30 a.m. in Hilden, 11:00 a.m. in Old Barns

~~Mar 29~~ 10:00 a.m. Joint Service in Hilden *Coffee & Conversation*

~~Apr 5~~ 9:30 a.m. in Old Barns *Coffee & Conversation*, 11:00 a.m. in Hilden

~~Apr 9~~ 7:00 p.m. in Hilden, Maundy Thursday Service *Communion*

~~Apr 10~~ 7:00 p.m. in Old Barns, Good Friday Service

~~Apr 12~~ 9:30 a.m. in Hilden, 11:00 a.m. in Old Barns, *Easter Service, Communion at both*

Children and Youth are welcome to attend our Worship Services but if a parent wishes to take their child out of the Sanctuary, the nursery room in the basement will be warm and welcoming.

Bookings for Hilden – contact Frank Arseneau at 902-897-4080

Bookings for Old Barns – contact Reg Henderson at 902-895-0740 or rhenderson8@hotmail.com

Bulletin Announcements – contact Judy at 902-895-7243 or lougheadjd@gmail.com by Wednesday evening

Charge Website – cliftonpastoralcharge.ca
Church bulletins are available on the website under the heading “NEWS”

Clerks of Sessions – if you need to contact the Session with any questions or concerns regarding the Spiritual Life of the church or to request a baptism or wedding, please contact your Clerk of Session:
Old Barns – Leslie Burrows 902-895-4008, **Hilden** -----

Need a Drive to Church (OB) – contact Reg at 902-895-5559 or Gordie at 902-895-6833

Social Committee (OB) – contact Kathie Chisholm at 902-895-0719

The Reverend David LeBlanc can be reach at 902-639-9301 (home) or by email at davidleblanc1@gmail.com which is connected to his cell phone.

Visitation - if you, or someone you know, want or need a pastoral care visit, please contact either the Clerk of Session or the minister, Rev. David.