

## God's Word in Uncertain Times

[4th Sunday of Lent: Scriptures: O.T. I Samuel 16:1-13; Ps 23:1-6; Ephesians 5:8-14; Gospel John 9:1-41](#)

**“We do not know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future”**

The above quote was shared with me several years ago when I was going through a difficult time. It has continued to be a gift and a reminder to me that while life has its challenges and we truly do not know what the future holds this side of heaven, we do know who holds the future. God does! God knows! God sees the future and knows every detail. The quote seems especially fitting given our current and uncertain situation surrounding the coronavirus outbreak. We do not know what the future holds, but we do know that God holds the future.

The Scriptures this fourth Sunday of Lent are profound and have been a source of great comfort and insight throughout the history of the Church. We could spend a lifetime reflecting on just one of these passages. The Scripture lessons reveal God's knowledge of the future and how God's vision is filled with understanding, healing and hope.

Helen Keller who was deaf and blind said, **“The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.”**

We are invited to reflect on the readings with the assurance and hope that God holds the future and that God sees with a true and loving vision.

The Old Testament reading in I Samuel 16:1-13 is the anointing of King David. It is a powerful testimony of how God sees and knows the future. God sees different than we see. God has vision. We are told in the reading that the prophet Samuel went to Jesse's house to anoint one of his sons as King. However, David, Jesse's youngest son, was considered too young and was left to tend the sheep in the fields. David's Father had a very limited vision (or no vision) for his son due to his age and what he could see on the outside. Yet, God's word reveals that **“while man looks on the outside, God looks into the heart.”** God sees clearly and knows fully. The Bible reveals in another passage that David “Had a heart after God's own Heart.” Again, while his own father and brothers thought David was too young to be considered King. God saw differently. God sees the future. God could see David's heart. God knew this young shepherd boy would become the great King of Israel and that David's prayers (most of the Psalms in the Bible) would be a source of comfort and truth for God's people. A comfort and source of hope for you and me today.

Not only did God have a great vision for David, God knew that David would have a wonderful vision of God. Having a heart after God's own heart and knowing his own love for the sheep he shepherded, David gave to the world a profound vision of God as our Shepherd, Psalm 23.

Psalm 23 is one of David's most familiar and comforting prayers. Millions upon millions of people throughout the world have been comforted by David's vision of God in this beautiful Psalm. **“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name sake. Even though I**

***walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”***

In this difficult and challenging time, I pray that Psalm 23 will continue to bring comfort, hope, and vision to our lives. God truly is our loving Shepherd. God knows our struggles and fears – our anxieties and concerns. God knows and is with us. God desires to comfort us and restore our souls. We do not need to fear for God is with us. In addition, God has revealed Godself to us in Jesus Christ who is our eternal Good Shepherd! Jesus says in John 10:14-15, “I am the Good Shepherd...and I lay down my life for the sheep.” Our Good Shepherd is with us and knows all our burdens. He holds the future and His vision for us is filled with love, healing and promise.

Our Gospel lesson is the compelling story of the man born blind where we find the blind man’s parents, neighbors, and the Pharisees had sight, but no vision. Like Jesse who had no true vision for his son, David, the disciples had no real vision for the man born blind. All they could see was a consequence of sin, “Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

Yet, Jesus has vision for the man born blind! Jesus sees clearly. Jesus answered saying, “Neither he nor his parents sinned. It is so the works of God might be made visible through him.” While the world only saw sin and blindness, Jesus’ vision saw physical and spiritual healing. Jesus saw the works of God being made visible through the blind man. Thus, the blind man’s trust and cooperation with the vision of God, brought healing to his eyes and his soul.

What do we see when we look at the struggle, uncertainty and difficulty our world is experiencing due to the coronavirus? Like the man born blind, can we trust God’s vision of healing and hope? In this time, can we embrace David’s vision of God as our Shepherd who is with us and for us? In this time, can we open ourselves to the Apostle Paul’s vision (in our second reading) of living as children of light? We are called to seek God’s vision and not the eyesight of the world. We are called, as Paul says, to seek and to “learn what is pleasing to the Lord and take no part in works of darkness.” In this unusual and uncertain time, we are called to embrace the certainty of God’s love and vision for each of us. God’s vision is full of love, healing, and hope. We are not alone.

In the healing encounter with the man born blind Jesus also revealed that he is the Light of the World.

Light plays a powerful role in the Gospel of John. In Genesis chapter 1, the first thing God speaks into creation is Light. John begins his Gospel as a new creation story. Genesis 1 starts, “In the beginning God created...” The Gospel of John chapter 1 starts, “In the Beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it....The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of Grace and truth.”

I mention John’s beginning because John introduces Jesus not as a baby in Bethlehem, but as the Lord of all creation and the Light of the world. In the beginning Jesus was always with God. As we say in the

Nicene creed. "I believe in Jesus Christ, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, Begotten, not made."

After Jesus says, "I am the light of the World" we are told he spat on the ground and made clay with his saliva and smeared the clay on the man's eyes.

This is a creation story, a new creation. In Genesis chapter 2 we are told that God formed man out of the dust of the earth and breathed life into him. Here Jesus mixes his saliva with the dust of the earth making clay and rubs that clay over the man's eyes and tells him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. The old creation left the man blind, the new creation in Jesus heals the man. But his physical sight is only a foreshadow of the true work of God which is the man's spiritual sight.

The pool of Siloam, while a historical pool, is also an image of baptism. It is in our baptism that we become a New Creation. It is in our baptism that we become Children of light. There is a deep connection between baptism and light. When we were baptized our parents or Godparents were given a light to be kept burning.

As baptized children of light we are called to grow in faith, trust God's vision for our lives, and embrace God's faithfulness and love. In addition, we are called to immerse ourselves, saturate ourselves into the light of Christ. We are called to live as children of light so that the works of God might be made visible in and through us. Again, this is the very vision Paul offers us in our reading from Ephesians. The Apostle Paul calls us to live as "Children of Light." We are called to live in, with, through and by the very light and vision of Christ. The light of Christ shines in the darkness of our time and the darkness cannot overcome it.

While this Lent is unlike any Lent we could have ever imagined due to the coronavirus, we are offered in this time a unique opportunity to grow in faith and to immerse ourselves in Jesus' light, love and vision. We are offered a unique time to grow in faith through prayer, Scripture reading, silent reflection and study - opening ourselves to spiritual healing and growth.

With this in mind, I want to encourage you to take some time each day to pray, read the Bible and if possible, watch or listen to some Catholic on-line resources to encourage you and help your faith grow. One resource I want to highlight is called, FORMED. We have set up an account for our parish. This is a free resource with wonderful on-line materials all about the Catholic Faith. Directions to sign up are below.

May we find comfort in God's vision for us and may we shine the light of Christ to our families and others (honoring physical distancing) offering hope, comfort and healing. Although we do not know what the future holds, we know who holds the future!

I will pray for you and ask that you pray for me.

God bless you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Deacon Steve

How to Sign up for FORMED Catholic online resources: (Again, it is Free)

1. Go to [www.formed.org](http://www.formed.org)
2. Click the "Sign Up" box in the middle of the screen

3. Click the "I Belong to a Parish or Organization" box (Third box)
4. Type "99801" in the Box under "Create an Account"
5. Click on "Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary", Juneau, AK
6. Click "Next"
7. Create an Account by putting your name and email in the boxes.
8. Click "Sign Up"
9. You will receive an email from FORMED giving you access to all their on-line materials.