

## Gospel and Sermon Transcript -4th Sunday in Lent - March 15, 2026

00:16

(bell ringing)

00:23

- Welcome to worship.

00:25

I should try that again when I actually can speak out loud

00:28

Good night.

00:37

goes everywhere with me now. I was mumbling until my voice comes back so

00:45

how's that better? Too much preaching at the first service that's that's the

00:53

explanation we'll lean into. As we gather on this fourth Sunday in Lent I think

01:01

about conversations that we have been privy to over the weeks some of them

01:06

rather cryptic like the one with Jesus and Nicodemus, then there was the very

01:11

intimate conversation with Jesus and a woman of Samaria when they were together

01:17

at Jacob's well. Well this week the conversation is actually, it's a

01:25

conversation over here, it's misplaced questions over there, there's an

01:28

interrogation thrown in and there's another conversation.

01:32

And frankly, I think what I am reduced to when the sermon time comes around is to

01:41

trot out some questions for us to reflect on and think about and to try to

01:46

make sense of, especially in the times that we find ourselves in this world. So

01:53

the arc of our worship service, very familiar at least for this season, and I'm

02:01

really enjoying how you're learning some of this new to us music like the first

02:06

song and the gospel acclimation you caught on really well and it's nice to

02:11

hear you join in singing that. So the other thing that I will mention today is

02:17

just a I guess a request for prayers for the family of Elvira Province whose

02:23

service was yesterday in St. Catharines so be praying for her family if you

02:29

would.

03:12

**The Holy Gospel according to St. John the 9th chapter.**

03:19

As Jesus walked along he saw someone blind from birth.

03:25

His disciples asked, well, Rabbi?

03:29

sinned, this one or his parents, that he was born blind. Jesus answered, "Neither this

03:38

one nor his parents sinned, he was born blind so that God's works would be

revealed in him.

03:45

We must work the works of the one who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no

03:51

one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." And

03:58

when Jesus had said this, "He spat on the ground and he made mud with the saliva

04:03

and he spread the mud on the man's eyes saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of

04:09

sala' which means sent. Then he washed and he came back able to see.

04:20

All of our Lord.

04:24

Won't you be seated.

### **The Sermon**

04:34

grace and peace to you from the one who is indeed our Good Shepherd. Some of you

04:44

may have questions already. Huh. I thought he was going to read all 41 of those

04:50

verses. How come he only read the first seven? What's up with that? Well, I don't

04:57

know if it's my decreasing bandwidth or my decrepitude increasing, but there

05:03

there might be a method to the madness.

05:06

Some of us had the experience this week

05:08

of reading this gospel.

05:09

We were going to read it scene by scene

05:11

and talk about each scene.

05:14

We didn't get very far.

05:17

We had questions.

05:18

We had questions behind the questions.

05:21

And I think those questions led us to a faithful place.

05:27

I'm not gonna say a happy place,

05:28

but a faithful place of lament.

05:34

You know how it is with questions?

05:36

Some are really good...

05:38

BANG!

05:39

What was that?

05:39

Oh, that was the neighbour's car door.

05:42

Ah, whew, not to worry.

05:46

Sometimes we like questions for that reason.

05:50

They help us get our bearings.

05:53

We get control, we think.

05:56

So, Jesus, whose fault is it that we suffer?

06:02

That's one of those questions that really you need

06:04

to ask the questions under the question.

06:09

As Jesus said, you're asking the wrong question, actually,

06:12

if you're wanting to assign blame and fault.

06:15

Look instead somewhere else.

06:17

Look to the glory of God, whose will it is to heal

06:20

and to restore.

06:26

In relating a story this week about that, I was telling a group that in my chaplaincy training, we were taught to ask other questions when somebody would say "why is their suffering?"

06:39

to ask, "Where is God in all of this?"

06:48

That's when you get the questions behind the questions. That's when we crave

06:54

answers. That's when we crave some sort of explanation for control, right?

07:00

Or am I only talking about the preacher who has discovered that he can get

07:04

Canadian news channels on his streaming services. Am I talking about that guy?

07:10

I don't need three consecutive newscasts. Do I? Well, I thought I did because I

07:18

wanted to know what is going on. What's driving the madness in all these

07:24

different quarters of the world? Maybe if I read sources from other countries,

07:28

Maybe I'll get some purchase on what's wrong with this picture

07:33

and why are bombs being dropped on school buildings

07:36

and why are children dying and why are people declaring war

07:41

who have no business declaring war?

07:46

And why is it that we're reading

07:47

about synagogues being targeted?

07:51

Why is it that we're hearing about people

07:53

because of whatever ethnic identity they are,

07:56

are being targeted?

08:28

really got at what Jesus was up to, or what it was like for a person to have been blind

08:33

since birth, and what it would be like to live that way, and then suddenly be able to

08:38

see.

08:39

I don't see those questions emerging in the Gospel, and maybe that's why I got impatient

08:44

and said, "Well, I'm just not going to read it then."

08:47

Because I think there are questions, important questions.

08:53

The main one being, where do we find the mercy of God in the world?

09:00

In the world as it is.

09:02

Not the one that used to be, or the one we wish we had, but in this one.

09:09

There is no easy answer for that question.

09:13

And so yes, I think it is a faithful response sometimes to lament.

09:17

Oh Lord, how long?

09:25

John's Gospel is really all about relationships anyway.

09:29

For all the questions that the followers ask

09:31

and that religious leaders ask,

09:34

Jesus kind of levels by saying,

09:38

it comes down to trust.

09:40

It comes down to a relationship

09:43

and it comes down to God being trustworthy.

09:50

There is so much ambiguity, isn't there?

09:56

And when those questions run dry, or when they fail to satisfy, where do we go?

10:07

We were reflecting on this very sermon this morning at the first service, and someone

10:11

said to me, "Well, I learned once that I can only control so much. Like what's right around me."

10:21

I thought, "That's somewhat helpful." Because I certainly am not going to sway anybody's opinion,

10:30

whether it's about increasing rents in Ontario, or unjust wars, "I've tried historically,

10:38

I get form letters.

10:40

What does one do?

10:43

How does one then deal with our immediate surroundings?

10:47

Are we as congregations?

10:48

How do we deal?

10:54

One of the questions that I think we touched on this week

10:57

was, what is our place now?

11:02

Who is our neighbor?

11:03

Who needs us now?

11:05

And what do we have that we can offer,

11:10

and who can we be for our neighbor?

11:15

Now it's not the version of us that used to be.

11:21

Some of us are having to wave goodbye to that version.

11:24

And it's not even the version that we aspire to be

11:26

because we're not maybe there yet,

11:28

and maybe we won't get there.

11:31

So we're really left with where we stand.

11:36

Where are we right now?

11:39

And how do we testify to God's mercy?

11:44

And how do we live that out?

11:46

How do we include those who are excluded,

11:50

much like a person blind from birth?

11:53

What is our capacity to do that?

11:57

I think those are the important questions

11:59

as we kind of brush up against John's gospel today.

12:07

But I think I want to offer the psalm as a bit of our mooring today.

12:13

Some of you have heard my song and dance about this already, so forgive me, but sometimes it's

12:19

okay to repeat stuff. You might have noticed, even as we read the psalm today, that it starts out

12:26

talking about God? Did you catch the shift in language to talking to God? Being led along

12:36

right pathways? And I think even more so when we are walking through that valley of the shadow of

12:44

death which can be literal death or it can be the death of many things. But it is those darkest

12:51

places in life where we say when the questions fail and we are in the dark you are with me.

13:07

So I guess it's not our job to have the answers but maybe it is to remind each other together

13:17

When we walk through these places, we're not alone.

13:21

We have each other.

13:24

We have the witness of scripture that says, yeah, God is with us.

13:27

God enters into that suffering and doesn't just

13:30

wait for us to have a good day before God shows up.

13:34

God's not real picky about finding us at our best.

13:37

But God's steadfast love follows us, as the Psalm says.

13:44

And here's where I like to pick a little bit at what

13:46

words get translated or mistranslated to be. Surely goodness and mercy shall

13:52

follow me? Well, kind of. But that was a real wimpy translation if I'm honest. How

14:00

about this though? Surely goodness and mercy shall hound me, shall pursue me,

14:05

shall cling to my life. That says something about God's relentless love.

14:13

And so with what little I know and the questions I have that go unanswered,

14:24

maybe in the end it's just that.

14:30

God's relentless love, but not just for one little individual.

14:39

God is about that long game. God's steadfast, stubborn love, the kind that

14:45

clings and hounds us and pursues us to the ends of the earth. That love, it

14:53

sustains us and it is for the healing of all things.

15:01

Questions welcome. Just know their limits.

15:07

Amen.