

Message for the 4th Sunday of Lent, March 22, 2020

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

This salutation is borrowed from St. Paul. In every circumstances we can ask for peace (*secure trust in God's care*) and grace (*whatever capacities we need, especially now*). The capacities we need now include trust in those who serve in government and medicine, patience, perseverance, wisdom and love. Especially love.

In today's collect we are reminded that Jesus is "the true bread which gives life."

The Old Testament reading tells of God's call for David to succeed Saul as king of Israel, despite being the youngest and eighth son of Jesse. David is anointed then, but will not succeed Saul for many years. Our psalm is David's most loved, Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd". (You might sing it, Hymn 645 or 646, "The king of love my shepherd is.")

In a passage from Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, they (and we) are called "children of light." We are to be "fruit of the light... found in all that is good and right and true." We both receive and reflect the light of God's love.

The Gospel reading records Jesus's healing of a man born blind. St. Augustine of Hippo suggested that we might think of that man as representative of all humanity. (Mull that over on your own.) In this passage there are really two stories, the first of Jesus giving a blind man the gift of sight; the second of those who denied Jesus, in spite of the miracle.

Most of us have faith that Jesus is indeed the savior of the world. And most of us also have doubts and questions. When you feel anxious, take it to the Lord in prayer, and remember that you are loved beyond comprehension by the one God: Creator, Redeemer and Spirit.

I do not like living in a pandemic. I am especially sad that I will not be able to lead our parish in worship on my last two Sundays as rector. However, I look forward to seeing you from time to time.

Here are some practices we can adopt in a time of waiting, a time of quarantine:

1. Pray and worship, both day by day and Sunday by Sunday. Especially on Palm Sunday and Easter. Pray for the world, the Church Universal, the sick, caregivers, those who work to keep us safe and fed, those who cannot work, for your parish, for family, friends and neighbors. Give as you can.

Worship of all sorts will be available on TV. The National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. and Trinity Cathedral in Portland (both Episcopal) will screen Sunday Eucharist by internet. A quick search should lead you to either. St. George's is posting the Sunday readings and reflections on our website and by email. Other resources are on the websites of both the Diocese of Oregon and the Episcopal Church.

The church office will be open from 10am to 2pm, Monday through Friday. You can borrow (or buy) the Book of Common Prayer, the Hymnal 1982, plus loads of good reading and videos from the library. Join with people across the diocese, the nation and the world. Especially in Holy Week.

2. We need not be alone. Keep in touch with family, friends, neighbors and fellow parishioners by phone and computer. Feel free to phone me and the incoming Rector, Pastor Gail Duba. Some people can visit

with neighbors outside their homes, keeping a six-foot distance from one another. Follow the news of Roseburg, our state, nation and world. Pray for all.

3. If you are able, offer help. Shopping, driving to medical appointments, and running errands will be needed by some. Consider volunteering at the church, or in the community. Opportunities will be coming up on the local news media: TV, newspaper, and radio. Check the parish web site every day: www.saintgeorgesepiscopal.com.

4. If anyone needs a pastoral phone call or visit, let me (and/or the office) know. We will do what we can. And we will pray for you and your need. (My and Pam's home phone is 541-479-0452.)

We are truly "children of light" as we journey through life. The current crisis is just one more of the many challenges we have met, and by God's grace, overcome.

I will write again before the 5th Sunday of Lent.

God bless us, every one.

Fr. Jim+