

## **Seeking: Honest questions for deeper faith**

### **Week 4 – Do you want to see?**

Welcome everyone to week 4 of our message series for Lent that we are calling “Seeking: Honest questions for deeper faith.”

This Lent, our readings offer us many stories of those who are seeking: Adam and Eve in the Garden after an encounter with a snake, Peter and the disciples on Mt. Tabor, the Israelites thirsty in the desert, a Samaritan woman at the well, a man born blind really seeing for the first time, Mary and Martha at the tomb of Lazarus. In each of these stories, someone is seeking a new beginning, a different life, a deeper faith. Each story unfolds with questions asked and faith explored. Often, an unveiling occurs where assumptions are disrupted, and a new perspective is revealed.

If you are new to Church or returning to Church at this time, you are probably returning with more questions and a critical lens. We hope this series will help all of us unpack some of those big questions in ways that are honest and faithful.

And I invite us all to engage in the spiritual practice of seeking.

To do this, I encourage you to stay curious, open, and nimble....soften your assumptions and expand your perspectives.

I've been saying over the course of this message series that, faith has two connotations: the deposit of faith that is handed down by the Catholic Church and the faith that we each personally embrace. The deposit of faith is unchanging but how we personally live the faith is a journey. Part of this journey is about seeking God in the world, seeking the good, seeking a deeper truth. As Catholics, we seek through prayer, the sacramental life of the Church and even scripture. In our seeking, we pull together memories, feelings, questions, and experiences, all in an effort to see God more clearly.

In order to engage in the spiritual practice of seeking, we must maintain a posture of listening, staying open and curious instead of calloused and closed off.

As I have been sharing with you, our seeking will be guided by a question each week. I pray that these questions will create a safe space for you to be raw and honest with your doubts, your fears, your confusion.

Ultimately, I pray that this journey of seeking leads each and every one of you to a new beginning, a restoration, a wider grace.

In our first week, we looked at the question, “who will you listen to?” We experience an onslaught of media in our culture from: TV shows, movies, the news, social media, YouTube. We must choose carefully “**who**” we will listen to. At the end of that message, we invited you to consider what voices might be pulling you toward what is life-giving rather than death-dealing.

In the second week of our message, we looked at the question, “how do we begin again?” By looking at the Transfiguration of Jesus, we learned that it isn’t about the mountain top experience or the transfiguration part that is transforming. The Transfiguration shows that Jesus is the one who can transform us, **and** it is in listening to Jesus that we are transformed.

Last week, we explored the question, “Will you give me a drink?” as we heard once again the story of the Samaritan woman at the well. We said that our physical thirst is only an echo of the way in which our hearts are meant to ache for God. Our need and capacity for God is infinite. It takes an infinite God to satisfy our needs.

That also means that the things of this world will never satisfy our thirst. So what can we do? We need to ask God to give us a drink...to fill this longing in our hearts.

If you want to catch up on any of these past messages, you can access them on the home page of our website. Just click on "Message Series."

Today, we hear the story of the blind man as we consider the question, "Do you want to see?"

When it comes to faith, sometimes there are bad questions—questions that are formed by assumptions, questions that lead us to judgment or isolation. When Jesus and the disciples encounter a blind man along the way, the disciples immediately ask,

*"Teacher, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2)*

They ask a bad question. Their question assumes that illness and disability are the result of sin; it assumes that the man deserved to be born blind; it assumes that physical blindness is a form of failure. They rush in to diagnose and treat before knowing what they are trying to address.

The disciples' first reaction is to debate the blindness and not deal at all with the human being. Analyzing the

problem instead of seeing the created being right in front of them, led them to ask the wrong questions. Rather than ask, “How can we heal and help?” they ask, “Whose fault is it?”

How often do we make bad assumptions and ask bad questions like this? Sure, we want to believe that people should be held accountable for their actions; generally speaking, this is not a terrible thing for society, but in this case, we are talking about a human’s personhood and the assumptions made about the person. It’s not a fault issue.

In these instances, we need to bring empathy and compassion instead of judgement and assumption.

Jesus responds,

*“Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him.”*

For Jesus, it’s not about the blame game but about the glory of God.

Yes, the man has a deficit...he is blind both physically and spiritually. In the gospel, Jesus puts mud on the blind man’s eyes and tells him to go to the Pool of Siloam to wash. The blind man also has to do his part and obey Jesus. Through the healing touch of Jesus and the blind

man's obedience, God's glory works through his imperfections. He is healed both physically and spiritually. Because his eyes are truly opened, he comes to a deeper understanding of the truth of Jesus.

As a matter of fact, the blind man's journey mirrors the Samaritan woman that we heard about last week. First Jesus is seen as a teacher. Then a prophet. And finally Jesus is worshiped as the messiah. And because of this revelation, this man now becomes a "Sent" one: a witness in the world to the glory of God.

This is how Jesus works in our life too. When we allow God to work through our imperfections with the help of His grace, healing moments can occur and help our faith to grow. More often than not, this healing that occurs is spiritual.

On the other hand, not everyone in the gospel story today was happy about the healing. The Pharisees interrogate the blind man and dissect the miracle of what happens to him. They ask bad questions because their intent is to drive the blind man out and prove that Jesus is a heretic. The Pharisees condemned Jesus because He healed the blind man on the Sabbath.

Rather than give God credit for the healing and new life—because it would lessen the perception of power and authority of the religious leaders—the rational cause-and-effect argument from the beginning is ignored and replaced with a position of, “We know what we know and nothing you do or say will change our minds.”

The Pharisees encounter with Jesus shows that it is really they who are blind. In their blindness they were unable to recognize what they do not see.

We too are often content to remain in ignorance especially when God’s light reveals truth that is uncomfortable. The reality is that it is easier for God to heal physical blindness than willful spiritual blindness. The key word here is “willful.”

So how do you see Jesus? Do you want to see? Are you open to healing? Do you want Jesus to heal your spiritual blindness?

Our prayer, fasting and almsgiving during Lent are about healing the places in our lives that are keeping us from God and to aid us in turning away from them. And it’s not easy. Maybe you’ve fallen away from the Lenten practices that you committed to at the beginning of Lent. It’s okay. Turn back to Him now. Lean on Him to give

you the grace to finish Lent strong and get back into those Lenten practices.

For all disciples in every age, Jesus is the one whom we must trust to grasp us, raise us up from our fears and heal our blindness.

Like the characters in our Lenten scriptures, we are also seeking many things: clarity, connection, wonder, justice, balance.

Jesus has the ability to heal us from our brokenness, our blindness, our sinfulness. The question becomes, “Do you want to see?”