

February 21, 2021
First Sunday of Lent

“The Ho Hum Syndrome”

As you know we live in a world that's full of promises. One of my favorites was back in 1979. It was a promise made by JCPenney. They came out with a car battery and their tagline for it was “the last battery your car will ever need.” You see, it came with a lifetime guarantee or warranty. Two years later, I had to have it replaced. The year after that I had it replaced again, and a year after that I had it replaced yet again. It's kind of like the barbeque I bought a number of years ago that has a lifetime guarantee. Unfortunately, not even a year after I bought it, someone stepped on the side shelf and broke it. So, I quickly contacted the maker and I figured since it has a lifetime guarantee it probably doesn't cover someone stepping on and breaking the shelf; but I'll get the parts and I'll just repair it myself. Lo and behold in a matter of months, parts were no longer available for the lifetime guaranteed barbecue. I have some Rigid tools that have a lifetime guarantee; and so far, so good. Though I will say the oldest one, which is a handheld drill with a battery, is on its third battery. You know promises are a great way to get votes. Back in 2008, we were promised that the economy would be restored. Then in 2016 we were promised we're got to clean the swamp. Now we have been promised that there will be unity through equity. For some reason I'm just not thinking that promise is going to come true; just as the other ones really didn't come true either.

But I guess that's why we're here today. We worship the Promise Keeper and if we were to continue with the Epiphany theme we had; it would be come and see, the God of promise. But it falls into that area that we talked about that our God is a God of prophecy and His prophecies are a promise. What we're going to do now is come and explore; explore the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies. It is critical that we understand that these prophecies are a part of the gospel. In fact, they are the very bedrock, or foundation of it. As we heard a couple weeks ago, Jesus Himself used the promises and the prophecies to

enlighten those disciples on the road to Emmaus. Paul used the prophecies to prove that Jesus was the Christ from scripture.

And in Matthew Chapter 11, Jesus again goes back to the prophecies. The reason is that John the Baptist was in prison and he sent his disciples to Jesus to ask a question. The question was, 'are you the One who is to come, or shall we look for another? And consider Jesus's response. He tells John's disciples go back and tell John, I quote: "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk. Lepers are cleansed in the deaf hear and the dead are raised up and the poor have good news preached to them." Jesus took Isaiah chapter 26:29-35 and 61 and shortened down those Messianic promises into one statement.

I want you to consider for just a moment the absolute absurdity and craziness of the Messianic prophecies. Let me put it into perspective. It would be like a politician today saying 'I will give sight to the blind. I will give mobility to the lame. I will give healing to those with cancer and I will give a hearing to the deaf. I will give words to the mute and those who suffer any ailments, I will heal them.' Wow! You know what we would hear the minute that some politician said that? We would hear all over the news: "Fact Check! Fact Check! This is impossible it has never been done before. Scientifically it cannot be done, and we must follow the science. Speaking of following the science, we are going to turn to the science of psychology; and we are going to pronounce that this individual suffers from delusions of grandeur.

Speaking of science, which we hold so dearly, what would it be if a scientist came along and said just simply, 'I can give sight to those who are born blind?' Fact check! No, you can't. It's impossible, because for someone who was born blind to be given sight, you would have to literally write memory for their brain so that when their eyes work, send the impulses to the brain, so the brain could match them up with the images that you have put in there and have an understanding of what they actually see. It's impossible and we go back to you suffer from delusions of grandeur.

But that's exactly what the prophecies say; “the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will have life.” Maybe the problem is that our faith gets in the way. Our faith that God is omnipotent. Which can sometimes, I'm afraid, lead to what we call the ‘Ho Hum Syndrome.’ You know how it goes; the Messiah will give sight to the blind. ‘Yeah, I know, big deal, I've been hearing it ever since I was a child in Sunday school. In fact, I think I've heard it like a billion times, so pastor could you move on to something new? If you're going to be talking about the sight, you know being given to the blind. I have heard it a jillion times, and it's just going to be another one of those boring, boring, miracle sermons.’ Therein lies our challenge to actually stop, pull ourselves away from Sunday school, from all the biblical things that we've heard and really contemplate this account, not story. Because understand both Josephus, (a Jew who was hired by the Romans to be a historian to chronicle what the Roman Empire did in Israel) as well as the Jewish Talmud, the Jewish sacred writings; both refer to Jesus as one who worked miracles.

Now needless to say, the Romans would gain nothing from saying that Jesus was a miracle worker or chronicling that. And the Jews, well they killed Jesus because He was performing miracles and it took the attention away from them. So, neither had anything to gain. Both were opposed and that's where our gospel picks up today. As He, Jesus passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked Him a question. ‘Who sinned, this man or his parents that he would be born blind?’ It reveals to us what the disciples had been taught in shall we say Sunday school and their whole lives. It was an understanding in the Jewish teachings that there must be a payment for sin. But like Catholicism, prior to the Reformation, sin equaled divine punishment. Divine punishment now and divine condemnation for eternity. But if you make atonement for your sin, God might forgive you and this then was turned in to a way to make money whether through sacrifices in First Century Israel; or the selling of indulgences and these kinds of things in pre-reformation Catholicism. But Jesus answers that question; that it was neither him nor his parents but it was because God's work could be displayed through him. This echoes what Paul writes in Romans, “all things work together for good for those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose.” So, a Christian born blind, or a Christian born deaf, or a Christian who loses his ability to walk, or like my best friends

dad lost his ability to see; God can take that and turn it into something good by how that person handles it. This is why sometimes you know bad things do happen to good people. We live in a sin marred world. God can take that bad thing; blindness for instance and turn it into good by using the Christian to show how to handle such a terrible thing.

In this situation, it's literally how God is going to handle it; and so Jesus sees him, spits on the ground, makes some mud, puts it on his eyes, tells him go to the pool of Siloam and wash there. It makes no medical sense. And yet this man in faith went washed and came back seeing. Now that's amazing! But let's go back to another prophecy in Isaiah chapter 6:9. "Keep on hearing, but do not understand. Keep on seeing, but do not perceive." The religious leaders saw this happen. A man born blind, mud on his eyes, goes to the pool of Siloam, he comes back, he can see. This is a phenomenal miracle! And their response? Give glory to God! We know that this man Jesus is a sinner. Now here we start to see what Isaiah was talking about. Both in chapter 35 and in chapter 6. In chapter 6, 'seeing but not seeing.' They saw that this man could see, but they could not see that Jesus was the Son of God, so they need to put him down. He's a sinner. And yet the man who can now physically see; we start seeing spiritual sight coming because he responds back whether he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know that though I was blind now I see. So, we see sight spiritual sight coming to him, we see spiritual blindness coming to the religious leaders. And that blindness gets even darker. Their response back is 'we know that God is spoken to Moses, but as for this man; we don't even know where he comes from.'

Now back to the blind man who is starting to see spiritually. He says, 'why this is an amazing thing you do not know where he comes from and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God, and does His will, God listens to him. Never since the world began, has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.' Do you see what he's starting to see? He's starting to see the fulfillment of Messianic promise and prophecy. And yet the religious leaders, they are going blind. 'You were born in utter sin; again back to that idea that if you're born blind you've been cursed. You were born in utter sin and you would teach us? And they cast him out. They saw but

they couldn't see. They could physically see this man could now see, but they couldn't see that Jesus was the Messiah. And they didn't want to, so they kicked the now seeing man out.

And when Jesus heard that he had been cast out, He comes to that man. Now remember the man never saw Jesus. He had just heard Jesus speak, and felt Jesus's hands as he put them on his eye and told him go to the pool of a Siloam and wash there. But my experience with people who are blind is that they have phenomenal hearing. And so, Jesus comes to him and says, 'do you believe in the Son of Man? Son of Man is the designation for the Messiah from the book of Daniel. Notice how the man responds with such respect; 'and who is he Sir that I may believe in him? Try to imagine now that you're this man. You've been given sight. You have not had it for 30-40 years. You hear this voice, do you believe in the son of man? "Who is it, Sir that I made may believe in Him? Jesus's response, "You have seen Him and it is He who is speaking to you." Talk about prophecy fulfilled. Lord, I believe! And he worshipped Him. He gained physical eyesight, but in that moment, he gained spiritual eyesight.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I ask you, do you see? Like the blind man, do you believe? If so, it is time to worship, worship the God of promise, worship the Promise Keeper and watch and see all the miracles that Jesus did to fulfill those promises.

In our Savior's Name, Amen.