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**March 22, 2020 – Sheltered in God’s House Forever**

**Given by Rev. Mattei**

1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-4

During this time of understandable global concern over the coronavirus, it is easy to let our anxiety and fear take over. We can observe the panic in the financial world as commodities are sold off, the rush to the supermarket to stock up on face masks, hand sanitizer, and various cleaning supplies and the multiple xenophobic reactions around the world.

In a time of danger such as this, we need to remain calm, pray about the situation, evaluate our options, and take the most stringent precautions to protect ourselves and especially the most vulnerable in our midst. Just like Jesus’ disciples in today’s gospel, we may hear pseudo-theological rationalizations to the question “Who sinned, Jesus?” Was the man of John 9 born blind because of his own sin or his parents’? Whom can we blame? How can we explain this health crisis? Is God punishing us for anything we have done?

Breathing can surely help us to remain calm. Remembering Jesus’ promise to be always with us along with God’s many other promises will also aid us in our prayer[[1]](#footnote-1). Remembering whose we are calms our fears[[2]](#footnote-2). Our Christian faith is well suited to bear witness to “the works of God” in dismal circumstances. And those “works” aren’t always about healing and happiness. Most of the times the “works of God” are manifest in the compassion, the charity, and the solidarity Christians are ready to offer as a response of faith to God’s gifts of mercy and grace. Christians historically have stepped up to alleviate poverty and suffering because those are the things Jesus spoke most clearly about. Christianity has known all along that those are the places where we encounter Jesus himself. And when we find ourselves helpless to alleviate the hardship or be agents of healing, we simply bear witness. Like the blind man in today’s gospel, we just refuse to stop embodying confidently what we believe to be true.

But that confidence is born out of an encounter. It comes from the acknowledgment that our mind, disconnected from God, lives in a murkiness state and is blind to the truth. The apostle Paul challenges all Christians to live in the light as children of the light. In prayer, we come closer to the God who frees us from all fears and wants and strengthens us to cross the valley of death unafraid.

In prayer, we come closer to a personable God who is ready to give us what we need...on a daily basis. It is in prayer that we move from speaking *about* God in the third person (“The Lord is my Shepherd”) to speaking *to* God directly (“*You* are with me; *your* rod and *your* staff, they comfort me.”)

In the face of whatever we are up against, our Shepherd fills us with God’s goodness and our cup overflows. If we genuinely and in the marrow of our being believe that God is with us, then the only logical consequence would be, "I shall not want." Then, we shall live in intimacy with God, sheltered in God’s house forever.

May the words of Jesus give us comfort today and always: “Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father’s pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32)

1. Matthew 28:20; Isaiah 40:29-31; 43:2; 54:10; Psalm 9:9-10; 18:2; 62:2; 78:35; 103:2-5; 107:13-16; Mark 11:24; Matthew 6:31-33; Romans 8:28.37-39; Philippians 4:4-7.19 and many more. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Isaiah 26:4; 41:13; 44:8; Psalm 27:1; 28:1; 31:1-3; 89:26; 144:2; Jeremiah 16:19; Matthew 11:28-29 etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)