

# Friday News from South West

March 17, 2023

## Lent Four

Our focus reading for the fourth Sunday in Lent is John 9: 1-41

God's restorative love is expressed in Jesus' life and ministry. Blindness and other ailments were often viewed as punishment for sin in ancient times. The disciples of Jesus and the leaders who oppose him assume this.

Biblical scholar Richard Rohrbaugh speaks of an ancient custom of spitting in the presence of the blind to protect oneself from the "evil eye." Jesus transforms that act of disdain into one of healing.

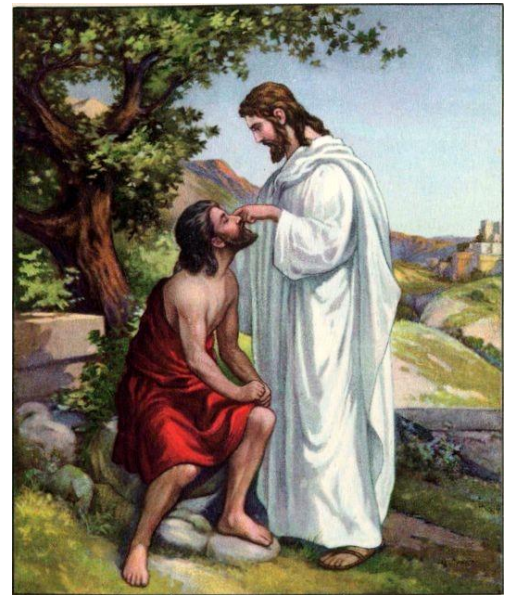
Sabbath-keeping was the most visible mark of practicing Judaism. Its weekly ritual of renewal reflected the God who "rested" (translating the Hebrew shabbath) on the seventh day of creation (Genesis 2:2).

In this story, Jesus' healing on the Sabbath creates the initial controversy (verse 16). At issue is what can or cannot be done on the Sabbath, and many oral traditions developed to provide guidance.

"Kneading" was technically forbidden. Jesus' making of mud (verse 6) could be viewed as such an activity. The larger question involves Sabbath and healing. Has Jesus broken or kept the law by performing this act?

The healing creates division within the community. Neighbours are divided over whether this is the same man they had known (verse 9). Pharisees are divided over whether Jesus is from God or not (verse 16). Even the man's parents distance themselves from their son for fear of the religious leaders (verses 21–22). These divisions within the narrative hint at divisions between church and synagogue in the author's time.

The transformation of the healed one is not just from blindness to sight. Initially, the blind man is a passive recipient of Jesus' actions, but he becomes more active as the story goes on.



*Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.*

By reporting what has happened, he becomes a teacher of theology to the teachers of theology. Eventually, this healed one becomes a disciple of the one who healed.

With some mud and some spit, Jesus changed the life of a blind beggar. These ordinary elements were used to change not only the life of one person but also a community as the news of the miracle spread. Jesus offers us guidance, refuge, hope, and healing.

When we see these as gifts from God rather than as gifts for us, our perspective can change. When we see those we want to cast out or ignore the way God sees them – as individuals who are valued and have worth – our entire world view can change as well.

Our prayer for Lent 4:

***God, help us to see the ways you turn the ordinary elements of life into something amazing.***

***Shift our perspective to place you at the centre so we may be transformed as we look at the world differently. Amen.***

In peace

Pastor Beryl, DLM

*[Words adapted from Seasons of the Spirit, 2023]*

## *Saint Patrick Wasn't Irish*

From [History.com](https://www.history.com)

St. Patrick was born in Britain—not Ireland—to wealthy parents near the end of the fourth century. He is believed to have died on March 17, around 460 A.D.



There is no evidence that Patrick came from a particularly religious family.

At the age of 16, Patrick was taken prisoner by a group of Irish raiders who were attacking his family's estate. They transported him to Ireland where he spent six years in captivity. (There is some dispute over where this captivity took place. Although many believe he was taken to live in Mount Slemish in County Antrim, it is more likely that he was held in County Mayo near Killala.)

During this time, he worked as a shepherd, outdoors and away from people, becoming a devout Christian. (It is also believed that Patrick first began to dream of converting the Irish people to [Christianity](#) during his captivity.) Lonely and afraid, he turned to his religion for solace, becoming a devout the Irish people to [Christianity](#) during his captivity.)

After more than six years as a prisoner, Patrick escaped. According to his writing, a voice—which he believed to be God's—spoke to him in a dream, telling him it was time to leave Ireland.

To do so, Patrick walked nearly 200 miles from County Mayo, where it is believed he was held, to the Irish coast. After escaping to Britain, Patrick reported that he experienced a second revelation—an angel in a dream tells him to return to Ireland as a missionary. Soon after, Patrick began religious training, a course of study that lasted more than 15 years.

After his ordination as a priest, he was sent to Ireland with a dual mission: to minister to Christians already living in Ireland and to begin to convert the Irish. (Interestingly, this mission contradicts the widely held notion that Patrick introduced Christianity to Ireland.)

Familiar with the Irish language and culture, Patrick chose to incorporate traditional ritual into his lessons of Christianity instead of attempting to eradicate native Irish beliefs. For instance, he used bonfires to celebrate Easter since the Irish were used to honoring their gods with fire. He also superimposed a sun, a powerful Irish symbol, onto the Christian cross to create what is now called a Celtic cross, so that veneration of the symbol would seem more natural to the Irish.

Many of the stories traditionally associated with St. Patrick, including the famous account of his banishing all the snakes from Ireland, are false, the products of hundreds of years of exaggerated storytelling.

**St. Patrick's Day Parade 2023:** Cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic, Montreal's St. Paddy's parade came back last year on a modest scale. This year's parade (our 198<sup>th</sup>!) will be on Sunday March 19<sup>th</sup> starting at noon. The route is along St. Catherine Street heading east from Fort St. to Metcalfe.

You are invited to a special event

**"Movie Night"**

**The Boxing Girls of Kabul**

**Friday, March 31<sup>st</sup> at 7:00pm**

Summerlea United Church,  
225-50<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Lachine H8T 2T7

**The NFB production by movie-maker Ariel Nasr**

Ariel Nasr hopes to be present, as will Shahla Sikandari, one of the girls featured in the film! Ariel and Shahla will be happy to answer questions after the movie.

Refreshments will be served, and there will be a freewill offering. The proceeds will be sent to Shahla's three siblings in Pakistan, to cover their expenses while waiting for their Canadian visas. Any questions about the funding of the siblings will be addressed by Sheila Laursen, chairperson of the West Island Refugee Coalition.

## [Zoom Lenten Bible Study](#)

The Lenten Bible study had to be cancelled this week due to a scheduling conflict, but it will continue next week, on Thursday, March 23rd. Use the same Zoom link below.

You are invited to a scheduled Zoom Lenten Bible Study with Rev. Christine-Marie Gladu, **Thursday mornings beginning March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 10:30am.**

Please find links below to the materials that will be discussed.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86964005097?pwd=Sm9aVlFqMFIFaVhuMEVoQINiTTBnQT09>

Meeting ID: 869 6400 5097

Passcode: 830264

### **Announcements**

**Sunday March 19<sup>th</sup>: 4th of Lent. Summerlea and SouthWest service at 10am**

SouthWest Annual Congregational Meeting: **Sunday March 26<sup>th</sup>** after the 10:00 service.

Palm Sunday is April 2<sup>nd</sup>

Good Friday is April 7

Sunday April 9: EASTER

### *Our Prayer List*

Bridget McCarthy

Phyllis Luther

Shirley Mitchell

Patrick O'Leary

Natalie Lalonde

Doris Smith

Maurice Tringle

Gilles Gauthier

Helen Cameron

May Cook

Donna Cobb

Keith Wood

Violet L'Esperance

Roberta Roberts

Sylvia Vallee-Girouard

If you would like your name added to the prayer list, or if you are requesting on behalf of a family member, call the office or contact Pastor Beryl directly.



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