As [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. 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. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” Some said, “It is he.” Others said, “No, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” So they said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed and received my sight.” They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.” They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them. So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.” The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.” So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, “Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.” He answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” And they reviled
him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” The man answered, “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 worshiper 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.” They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.”

This was probably one of the toughest Sundays for me and perhaps for you as I had to cancel church against an enemy of sickness in the middle of a pandemic when the instinct of most is to gather and worship at church. The only other time I’ve seen such fear and concern was during 9/11 as a pastor. This is much tougher. It has disrupted our lives while leaving the electricity on and the internet going. It seems unreal. And yet our Gospel text for today very much gives us the answers to what we are facing.

The big question of course for today is why is this happening? How could an illness that originated in China come all the way over to America? A respiratory virus that is very contagious and has caused so many people to be sick and die what made this happen? Why is it so hard to stop? Why is it forcing our country to shut down and many people to lose their jobs? Why is God allowing all this suffering and complications?

That “why” question is the same one the disciples asked Jesus. As [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

In other words what is the cause of this suffering for this blind man? Why did it happen so that we may avoid that sin and not suffer or cause others to suffer in the serious way. After all no one wants to be blind or born blind, and yet what is Jesus’s answer? It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.
All human suffering is caused by sin directly or indirectly. Yet Jesus is saying what?“Instead of focusing on the past focus on the hope of God to be able to be at work for the future.” And really isn’t that the case we are facing today? People are focusing on this virus, the sickness, death and disruption it is causing across the globe. It is turning many people’s lives upside down. And they don’t’ like it for good reason.

It’s hard to fathom for many people who have lead ordinary lives up to this point. You are doing your job and working hard. You are doing everything to earn a living. You aren’t sick. The people around you aren’t sick. And yet you are told you can’t go to work, and others can’t come to see you. And with more unemployment the whole country suffers as there is less business. This is terrible just like being blind is terrible.

But it is also a great opportunity for people to turn to God and repent. To allow the hope of Christ to make a difference where nothing else can do that! Dr. Buls on his commentary for this text makes a big point, “Jesus came to save souls not to punish them.” This is an opportunity for the hope of the Gospel.

To us as Christians, we say, “we understand.” That we have a confidence that whether it be terrorists, unemployment, or an illness. Nothing can separate us from God and the hope we have in Christ. We see what really matters and what does not.

This virus has made people realize what they have control over and what they do not. We like to thing we are in control. We can work hard, save up and enjoy life according to what we desire. The virus is making the world realize we aren’t in control. There are things in this world that can disrupt our lives in just a few weeks like this virus.

But what happened when Jesus reached out to the blind man. Jesus put mud on his eyes and told him to go wash it off. So the blind man never got to see who healed him. He just obeyed Christ and experienced the blessing. He was healed.

What was the reaction of the people who saw the blind man being healed? Did they celebrate what Jesus had done? No they questioned the blind man. You weren’t really blind. And no one else wanted to affirm not even his parents that he had been blind but now was healed. They were so afraid of admitting the difference Christ could make.

We all have been washed clean of our sins through Jesus Christ by what he did on the cross. We received it through baptism. Christians recognize the need to repent and trust and believe in Christ to receive the hope and comfort that Jesus brings.

This virus becomes an opportunity to witness to each other and to the world. We don’t’ know everything that will happen in the next few weeks. But we do know that with God in our lives we are not alone. That we have been sealed with Christ, forgiven of our sins, and are worthy of eternal life. And whatever happens we will see Christ in the end. And that gives us hope.
The question to ask to ask the world is, “Do you especially see the need for Jesus right now?” Do you understand the need to repent and have hope in something outside yourself? Do you understand the difference Jesus makes?

Because the people around the blind man didn’t see it. They were in such denial that they didn’t even want to celebrate the difference Christ could make. That Jesus is God and our Savior. They questioned the blind man more and more. What was His response? “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 worshiper 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.” They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.

The blind man got more and more firm in his faith. He could have said, I just got healed and I don’t know how. But he said, this man this Christ must be God and our Savior that is why He was able to heal me. And yet the Pharisees were in such denial, they couldn’t give thanks to Jesus for healing this man and they threw this man out of the synagogue.

There are many in the world who will continue to be in denial. They will demand for the government to do more. They will also blame that same government for not doing more. At the bottom of this is the fact that they think someone needs to fix this situation so I can go on with my life. When instead of realizing we are the ones that need fixing. We need to be forgiven of our sins. That is the more important thing that needs to be fixed. Far more than a cure for this disease, or a fix to the economy is our sins to be forgiven and the need for Christ?

Jesus told the blind man now healed. You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.”

The question we need to first ask ourselves is, “Are we blind? Do we see the most important thing is to repent and remember we have Christ on our side in the face of this virus?” And that is the same question we need to ask everyone around us. “Are you blind to the need of God in this situation? Or do you see the need for God to work just like He did for the blind man.”
The blind man lost his family and congregation because He believed in Jesus. Yet He gained His Savior and eternal life. His eyes were open to what was truly important. The Pharisees and others closed their eyes to what was important. As we deal with the virus are our eyes blind and we only focus on the immediate inconvenience or are our eyes open to the hope of Christ to let Him guide us through this crisis and anything else we face?