

**Sermon by Pastor Samuel King-Kabu, for St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church
March 22, 2020.**

Having Enough Faith to See

Texts: 1 Samuel 16:1-13
Ephesians 5:8-14 (Series A, 4th Sunday in Lent) Ps. 23
John 9:1-41

Prayer:

***God never stops acting to fulfill our real needs
"I know this much: I was blind before; now I can see"***

Contemporary poet, W. H. Auden, was one of the first to call our period in history "*The Age of Anxiety*." Since that time, others have picked up on it because characterizes our time in history- and feeling of apprehension, of worry, of doubt, of uneasiness about the future. It is a mood that has affected our culture. We find it in our art and literature and music.

It is said, if you go to New York City to the Museum of Modern Art, you will see a painting by Andre Rousseau (*often called the "Godfather" of modern painting*) of a gypsy woman sleeping out in the open with her guitar by her side. It's all very peaceful, except in the background there is a menacing lion.

There is no explanation, no clue as to why the lion is there. There is often no rational explanation for our anxieties, but they are there. And, as you look at the painting, you get the feeling of threat, of dread, of tension. You sense that something is very wrong and it leaves you uptight.

This business of anxiety, this constant worry we carry around with us, robs life of its joy, robs us of our sleep, drains our energy and vitality, contributes to and /or causes many forms of illness. I don't have to list them.

Just turn on your TV when you go home and list the remedies being advertised that sell by the millions every day. Because the "*Age of Anxiety*" describes the time and the society in which we live, it should be cause for our great excitement to know that a better way is open to us, not next week or next year but

right now. With recent outbreak of COVID-19 and the death toll mounting around the world our anxiety has skyrocket.

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I miss those days when you sneezed, they said 'Gesundheit' or "Bless you" Today they would say 'Get Lost' We're so full of anxiety and worry all the time because we don't know where life is really, taking us. "What's going to happen if I do this?... What's going to happen if I don't do that? ... How can I be sure? ... What if he does this?... What if she does that?" Sound familiar? Each question is like an S.O.S. which, we have determined in advance, will never be heard. We just know that nobody is listening.

That is the very same problem the Pharisees have in today's Gospel Lesson. The Pharisees are badgering a man because Jesus cured his blindness-on the Sabbath Day. They want him to deny that Jesus cured his blindness because it was against the law to cure on the Sabbath. According to their strict legalistic approach to life and to religion, this could not have been a sign of God's power at work

God was free to listen to the man's problems on Sunday through Friday, but not on Saturday. Not even God could authorize work on the Sabbath. Well, Jesus had news for the Pharisees, and for us: God is listening always, twenty-four seven. He knows where you're hurting. He knows every one of our problem areas. He hears each question, each S.O.S. before you can send it out.

He has the answers and He will come to our rescue-any time, any place-if we will only let Him. We must tear down that wall of worry and doubt and anxiety about the future we've built up between us and God. This wall has two major components.

One is the *anxiety* we feel concerning our ultimate existence. Things we've done or haven't done in the past continue to haunt us in terms of their effects on our final destiny. We worry when life just doesn't seem to have any kind of ultimate meaning. We worry about death: You will die and I will die, everyone we love will

die and, in spite of our pious phrases about life after death, there is anxiety over the fact of death.



The second component in the wall we build between ourselves and God is anxiety about our *daily existence*: what we shall eat, what we shall wear, how we shall be entertained. And I'm sure you will agree that these two major worries, anxiety about our ultimate existence and anxiety about our daily existence are constantly overlapping.

What to do about it? Over and over Jesus is telling us in the Gospels that we will overcome anxiety, and it will not rob life of its joy, rob us of our sleep, drain our energy and vitality, if only we will respond to God's love for us with absolute, unconditional trust.

Strangely enough, this is a real problem for those of us who come to Church regularly. We hear it all the time: trust God; have faith in God. We hear it so often that we're not listening anymore.

It has become a tired cliché. But, the trust in God which Jesus teaches us is not just a pious phrase, not something superficial, not merely a surface religious expression. It is a style of life. It is a style of living in which we actually trust ourselves so completely to God's loving hands and presence that we are empowered moment-by-moment to handle our anxieties. Notice, I said "*handle*," not "*get rid of*" case in point coronavirus pandemic.

As finite beings, we'll never be able to rid ourselves completely of worry and anxiety. But trust in God's love and concern enables us to cast off the destructive anxiety that robs us of life. Trust in God's love and concern enables us to live life creatively.

Composer-musician, W. C. Handy (1873-1958), began his life in abject poverty. Through a long and often difficult career, he eventually emerged into international prominence as one of the creators of the musical form we call the "*Blues*."

In fact, Handy is often referred to as "*Father of the Blues.*" The high light of W.C. Handy's life was when he was invited to play his own music at the first Inauguration of President Eisenhower.

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He could hardly believe it when the invitation came bearing both the names of the President-elect and Mrs. Eisenhower. He was in his seventies and totally blind. But this would be the high moment of his life. And so, old Billy Handy went out and bought a new suit and he polished up his trumpet and he began to practice to get ready.

On the big day, as the celebration progressed, the entertainment fell far behind schedule. W. C. Handy couldn't see what was going on but he could feel the excitement, the surge of people around him as he sat clutching his trumpet and waited ... and waited.

Finally, two hours after midnight, the time had come for him to play for the President and Mrs. Eisenhower. W. C. Handy stood up. The orchestra began to play. He put the trumpet to his lips and out came "*St. Louis Blues,*" his favorite composition.

The song came out in clear, mellow, beautifully as "*Blues*" are supposed to be played. He poured his heart and soul into it. He played through the chorus twice. Then he sat down, exhausted.

There was a look of satisfactory joy on his face but *no one* had the heart to tell him that President and his wife had left the ballroom half an hour before his performance. He had played his best music for the President and his lady and they weren't even there to hear him.

How often it seems like that to us in our relationship to God! We've done our best, we've played our finest music and then we discover that God wasn't listening- or so it seems. And it's Good Friday all around us.

But Easter will dawn for you and for me, if only we will allow ourselves to trust in God's love and mercy so completely that there can be no doubt that He is

listening: God never misses a single note! That's what our Lenten preparation is all about.



We're in the process of renewing our trust in God's love and mercy. The scientist Albert Einstein: once said: "*All I want to know is God, and everything else is trivial.*" We're building up our trust in a God who never stops listening to our concerns and never stops acting to fulfill our real needs-according to His Divine Plan for our fulfillment.

I leave you these words of encouragement: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9).

We're tearing down the walls of destructive worry and anxiety so that our *Good Friday* may become our *Easter Sunday*. Only with those walls of destructive anxiety down can we say with the man in today's Gospel Lesson:

"I know this much: I was blind before; now I can see" (Jn.9:25).

May God grant us Faith enough to see his miracles in little things

Amen.

