

Sunday, March 22, 2020 – 4th Sunday in Lent - Yr A

(Psalm 23; Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41)

Defining Moments – that is the topic of this sermon. You know – those moments that really define exactly who you are – both to yourself and to the world. In speaking this past week with a few others about this subject we agreed that there are some moments in life that really DO define us. Yes, we agreed – marriages and births and even job offers or promotions define who we are – at least to some extent.

But this sermon is not about those grand and obvious moments. This sermon is about those times in life that define us in a less obvious way.

I know that those moments that define us as “wife” or “father” or “graduate” or “partner in the firm” are all important life-moments. But these are not really the moments that make us truly WHO we are. Before God, and even before one another – it is those gut-wrenching, hard decisions that we MUST make from time to time in life that are the measure of the person we are. You know of what I am speaking. Those moments or times in life that the decision is anything but easy. Sometimes between a “rock and a hard place.” Where the decision is anything but the obvious one. Where the decision may change your perspective on life – and may even change your life forever.

We all remember the movie “Sophie’s Choice” – wherein an impossible decision had to be made. The Dairy of Anne Frank – tough decisions!

But we do not have to turn to books and movies – however truthful they may be. We all have life defining decisions to make at times. I wonder how many people make life defining decisions during a war? Or to make the decision to have a 4th abortion – of a child very much wanted – but who is destined for a short and painful life.

That is a moment that defines us! To make the decision to let your 6-year-old child go to God, after a serious car accident – that is a defining moment. To make the decision to forgive the person who murdered your sister – that is a defining moment.

All these situations are people in my **personal** life.

To tell the other person of your sin, to come clean about those things you have stolen, to right a wrong you have committed and not JUST confess it to God, to clean up your

drug or alcohol problem – these are the moments that define us. To make the hard and difficult – if not impossible decisions – these are the moments that tell us – and others – exactly who we are.

You know what your “life-defining moments” have been. Some you have kept them secret. Some are known to others. All are known to God. We know that once these decisions have been made – once we step forward into the future moment – there will be no turning back – we will never be the same again – nor will our life.

We know too that sometimes we have made the “right” decision (whatever that means). Sometimes we just know that we perhaps did not make the “right” or appropriate choice. Thus – either way – we have to live with our decision – our choice.

Hopefully, and I pray – that these life-defining moments (and decisions) come at a time when we are old enough and wise enough and well enough – to understand the consequences of a decision or choice.

Defining moments and decisions – is exactly the situation faced by those who knew the “man born blind” in the gospel lesson today. We know the story – Jesus heals the man born blind – but sin of sins – Jesus does this on the Sabbath! One question we might ask is: are the Pharisees angry that the man was healed – OR that the man was healed ON THE SABBATH. Their anger is never made clear to us. Once the man is healed by Jesus, he, his parents, the Pharisees and even the neighbours of the man – reveal exactly who they are and the very moral fibre they are made of. These are moments that define each of them. And their choices will affect them the rest of their lives.

Once the man made a decision to be healed – which took a great deal of courage – the man knew that his life would never again be the same. In fact – it is possible that once he made the decision to be healed – he already risked being “driven out” of the synagogue or Temple. In the minds of the Pharisees – to choose healing meant going against all that God ordained. Since the man was born blind – God MUST have “ordained” this. Therefore, the man was already deemed a sinner. To stay blind meant he was accursed. To receive healing meant much the same!

Albeit he could “see” now – but either way, in his world – he could not win.

In essence – the man had nothing to lose. We hear that often in the gospels. This man however is somewhat unique – he challenged the Pharisees like few others would wish to do. He literally “burnt his bridges.” But why not – his life defining moment meant (as they always do) that there was NO going back.

You gotta like the gumption of the man! He stood up to the Pharisees. Did you hear him say: “I do not know IF Jesus is a sinner. All I know is that I was blind and NOW I see.” Already we are saying “Good for him”! Then when the Pharisees asked what Jesus did – the man said: “I told you already BUT you would not listen.” Gotta like this man! He does push the envelope a bit when he says to the Pharisees “why – do YOU want to be HIS disciples?” He seals his fate when he says: “this is an astonishing 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 he does listen to one who worships and obeys him... Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If (Jesus) were not from God, he could do nothing.” That did it for this man. He is “driven out” of the Temple and therefore most likely out of Jerusalem altogether – never to return. That is a defining moment – to receive healing AND stand up to the authorities!

The parents of the man also stand up to the authorities. They tell the Pharisees to speak with their son themselves – telling the Pharisees “he IS of age.” The decision to say this perhaps – and quite probably – cost them their “admission” into the Temple as well.

The neighbours however, when questioned by the Pharisees, backed down. They had a choice to make – a defining moment – and they chose to “play it safe.” We cannot and will not judge them. Just as Jesus made life-changing decisions time and again – just as the blind man did – just as the parents of the blind man did – the neighbours chose what they will and will not stand for in life. Who they will and will not be. What will and will not define them. To live this way or that way. And always, always, a tough choice is made. And the measure of the person we are – is decided.

Life, really is, about these defining moments. The season of Lent is most definitely about these tough and defining moments of life.

To walk the way of the cross with Jesus. Or not.

To walk the way of the cross with others. Or not.

To walk to way of the cross yourself. Or not.

To walk through death. And to choose life in the end – but a very, very different kind of life.

That is Lent. And to a large extent – that is life.

How will you choose?

What will you choose?

Amen.