

John 9:1-41

3/22/2020

To mention, or even think that we live in a complex time is an understatement to say the least. It ranks right up there with a comment we may hear on a hot, humid August afternoon, “a little warm out there, isn’t it”? We get their point immediately. Or on the level of saying to a friend, “How are you doing, haven’t seen you in a hundred years”, statistically possible, but not likely. How dark was it? “I couldn’t see my hand in front of my face”. This is easy to understand, and how many of us have tried it? Putting our thoughts into words is a way that we express ourselves, sometimes in passing, other times in conversation, working our thoughts toward conclusions. Oftentimes it is difficult to reach a conclusion, in times like these it may be nearly impossible to know where to start.

The month of March, in the year 2020 has been in a constant upheaval; changing lives, interrupting routines, and promoting actions, the likes of which we have never seen before. Alterations have been coming at us in rapid succession, daily and even hourly, handing us modifications that we have no time to prepare for. A virus, now of pandemic proportion has us taking detours down paths that we have never traveled, to destinations we’ve never seen. The forecast is foggy, visibility limited, conditions questionable, we may just be flying blind.

Our Gospel story today has all of the drama and intrigue of a six part play, or series, that centers around blindness, a story simple in appearance, yet woven together in ways that ask complicated questions. Part 1 opens with Jesus’ disciples questioning Him as to who sinned, causing this man to be blind. Jesus answers thorough explanation, and healing. In part 2 we meet the neighbors, as they wonder if this is the man they had known only as the beggar. We hear the man speak for the first time, saying it is he, as he tells of who it is that restored his sight. Parts 3, 4, and 5 lead us through the interrogation process involving the Pharisees, the man’s parents, and the return of the man himself, now a fearless disciple. In part 6, the man is alone as Jesus returns, and He reveals Himself as God, the Son, and the man bowed before Him, and worshiped Jesus.

We may be able to see ourselves in one of the main characters from this chapter of John’s Gospel. The blind might just represent anyone in the Christian community in a time of struggle, loss, or despair; someone who would have their faith restored by rinsing in the Water, and Word of God. The quest to find out why the man was blind, a cause, or a purpose is not the point here, instead we see it as an occasion for using God’s works of healing. Opening our hearts and minds to God, helps to open our eyes and ears, this is an opportunity for all of us to be church to others. We are representative of God’s Kingdom in everything we do, and at all times, this is our way of life, with no on/off switch. The healing that we do for others does not need to be seen as

miraculous from our point of giving, but our efforts on behalf of God may be received as a miracle to someone in need.

The situations we are presented with are indeed our own parables, and we need to be ready to speak and act in Christ like ways, while at the same time being open to what God needs us to do. We seem to be introduced to the right people at the right times, whether they are here to help, or be helped, our faith has delivered them, or delivered us. We are chosen, all of us, for what we are able to do, when we are called upon. As we heard in 1 Samuel 16:7 “for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart”. Not only do we not see ourselves as others may, we do not see ourselves as God does, imagine how blind we are to ourselves!

Our Psalm for today seems to be written in our minds, and on our hearts, as many have carried it with them for most of their lives. Here is a faith statement for each member of God’s family; we can cling to every word and verse, making them our very own. Right in the center of this Psalm we read the words, “for you are with me”, which we can understand in knowing that God is at the center of our lives, God is with us always, we are not alone. No matter the circumstance, nor the place, He is with us, on this we can rest assured, and here we place our faith.

John Newton, 23 years old, and a member of the British Navy was on ship the night of March the 9th, 1748 as a brutal storm descended on the crew. Newton later wrote “That tenth of March is a day much remembered by me; and I have never suffered it to pass unnoticed since the year 1748. The Lord came from on high, and delivered me out of deep waters.” He went on to write several hymns, based upon Scripture, including one in 1779 that he titled, “Faith’s Review, and Expectation”. This is a very well known song, to say the least, not likely by this title, but most certainly by the first verse. “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.”

As we continue on our Lenten journeys, we need to remember that all people have been saved by God, and He continues to give us good, clean vision. During this 40 day season, we are called on to prepare for the Three Days of Holy Week and Easter, to walk with Jesus, and to experience all that he gives us. Those that were with him in his final weeks, and days on earth had no idea what was to happen, even though he had told them what the future would bring. Jesus had clear vision, and was not blinded by those who did not accept Him for who he was, and yes God was with Him, and all the others there, believers, and detractors.

God is with us, right here, as we reside together in an area rich with fertile soil, and good people. In our rural setting, we are able to enjoy our neighbors, and communities; but while we are immune from many things in the world, we still get caught up in situations that we would rather

not have anything to do with. In times that we would rather stick to ourselves, we are forced out of our comfort zones, and into some places we are not comfortable with either. Our schools, places of work, and normal hangouts are now different environments, they are empty, or nearly so, but God is there. Lives have been drastically altered, we are more alone than usual, our routines have changed, things are totally different, but God is here.

We need God, and He needs us; we can help out using the gifts God has given to each one of us. Don't worry that you may not have the same gift that someone does, for you have a gift that they do not possess, and we need to use our gifts for the benefit of all, while we are still the needy, we are also the needed. There is darkness in this world, sometimes more than we think we can deal with, and this is when we can follow the light of God, and be light to others. A person's life doesn't have to be so dark, that they can't see their hand in front of their face, or the stars in the sky, or flowers in bloom, they just need the light of hope, and love to be able to see beyond what has blinded them. We do not have to measure this light in billions of kilowatt hours, just in small amounts, enough to survive with. Helen Keller, author, educator, and activist, both blind, and deaf, offers these words of illumination. "There is no better way to thank God for your sight than by giving a helping hand to someone in the dark".

While things are in turmoil, we find comfort in knowing that God is with us, and we have each other; God created us all to live in relationship to one another, and we shall be about his business. The second reading for today, from the 5th chapter of Ephesians reminds us to keep what we know God wants of us, together with what we do for God. From the translation, The Message, by Eugene Peterson; "You're out in the open now. The bright light of Christ makes your way plain. So no more stumbling around. Get on with it! The good, the right, the true - these are the actions appropriate for daylight hours. Figure out what will please Christ, and then do it". No matter how dark these days get, we can, and we will find the light of God!