

4th Sunday Lent A 17

March 26, 2017

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.
Amen.

The Gospel of John is often referred to as the book of signs. Because Jesus does many signs and wonders which help others to see and to believe that Jesus is the Messiah. John also includes many images; often they are opposing images such as light and darkness, day and night, seeing and being blind.

The first words of Jesus in the Gospel of John are; 'come and see' as he invites his new disciples to follow him. Soon after, Philip goes and finds Nathanael saying 'we have found the Messiah, come and see'. When Philip and Nathanael come to Jesus, Jesus tells Nathanael things about himself. To which Nathanael replies, 'where did you get to know me?' Jesus says I saw you under the fig tree when Philip called you. Nathanael declares that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah. To which Jesus replies; 'do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the tree. You will see greater things than these.'

Last week Jesus had a conversation with the woman at the well. There he told her many things about herself which compelled her to return to the village and say to others; 'come and see this man who told me all about myself. He cannot be the Messiah can he?' Then after the villagers come and see Jesus they also come to believe in Jesus.

Here today it is Jesus who as he walks along with his disciples sees this man born blind. Jesus uses their question as a teaching moment, working to help the disciple to see and believe in him. Jesus tells them; 'we must work the works of him who sent me while it is day, night is coming when no one can work, for I am the light of the world.'

March 26, 2017

As I read through today's gospel story that old saying kept coming into my mind. Seeing is believing except here you might also add; 'but not all the time'. For even when the man formerly born blind returns from washing at the well, given sight for the first time the people do not believe. It is like they want to believe, but it is difficult after all who has ever heard of a man given sight who was born blind.

I love the conversation which takes place. The man returns from washing in the water, offering us images of baptism, where we are cleansed and made new, proclaiming this miracle which has taken place. As the people begin to question him, the man replies 'all I know is it went to wash in the pool, I was blind and now I see.' But others began to doubt the miracle or begin making excuses that maybe he was faking his blindness all along.

I have worn glasses for over 50 years since I was about 7. I remember more than once after getting a new pair of glasses as my eyes continued to get worse. I was often not aware of how much detail and some of the things I was not able to see, until I receive my new prescription. Suddenly I could see the clouds in the sky, the detail of the leaves on the trees and the cracks in the sidewalk. I can only imagine what this man was experiencing after receiving sight for the first time in his life. To look for the first time and see his parents, to see the town where he lived, to see everything around him.

Yet the people who this man encountered could not believe it was him or that his life had been changed in such a dramatic and drastic way. Then as the story unfolds, as this man gives his testimony about his experience and about Jesus, that Jesus has left the picture. Here there are conversations with the man and the people of the town, the man and the Pharisees, the Pharisees and the man's parents, and the man with the Pharisees a second time. All

March 26, 2017

along this man was witnessing about his encounter with Jesus, but not talking with Jesus, and Jesus is not even in the picture.

As they go back and forth, the man gets tired of answering the questions, of trying to prove that which is staring them in the face. The people and the Pharisees both refuse to see that which is right in front of them, they become blind to the fact that this miracle has taken place. The very fact that the man born blind has received his sight has caused many around him to refuse to see.

It is here when Jesus once again enters into the picture. Jesus seeks the man and finds him, this time asking 'do you believe in the Son of Man?' The man replies; 'tell me who it is so that I might believe.' Then Jesus says to him, 'You have seen him and the one speaking to you is he.' The man proclaims, 'Lord, I believe.' The good news is not only does the man see Jesus and believe, but Jesus sees this man in need and works the will of the one who sent him and continues to send us.

Jesus came into this man's life and his life is changed. This man not only has been given life, but an abundant life. He now has a future and a hope for something more than living a beggars life, existing on the charity or the handouts of others. Now he is changed and is sent back out in the world as a follower of Jesus. He has a story to tell, an experience to share, an example to be seen by others.

When you encounter Christ, your life is changed and it becomes hard for others sometimes to understand or trust the new you. The story of a man named John Newton, who in the midst of storm at sea, had his eyes opened to the truth of the life he was living. John was a captain of a cargo ship in the late 1700's, and the cargo he carried was slaves from Africa to England. It was

March 26, 2017

during a voyage in the midst of a storm his eyes were opened and for the first time saw his cargo not as animals but as humans. John Newton gave up his life as a captain and became a priest in the Church of England during a time of renewal in the church during at the end of the 18th century. He wrote the hymn "Amazing Grace", the first verse we all know, *Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost and now I'm found, was blind but now I see.* It was in the midst of the storm, John encountered the living Christ, his eyes were opened and he understood he was called to do more with his life than haul slaves. John realized from his encounter with the living word of God, that his eyes were opened and that he was being called and sent to be a shining example for others who refused to see.

Changes take place and people refuse to see or to acknowledge anything has happened. As much as we seek the light, we often prefer to remain in the darkness, or at least prefer that which we know and understand when confronted by something which is new or different from our experience. Jesus tells us that as long as he is in the world, he is the light of the world. Yet even as we linger in the darkness, even as we refuse to see the changes which continue show themselves Jesus returns to find us. Then changed, renewed and refreshed by our encounter with Jesus we are sent out to be shining examples of his light for the whole world to see and believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

AMEN

T.G.B.T.G.

Pastor Michael