

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT MARCH 26<sup>TH</sup>, 2017

### SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

Based on John 9:1-41

A Meditation by Rev. Peggy Jensen

Prayer; Holy God, why is it that we look, but do not see? Bring us again and again into your light until your ways become visible to us, and bear fruit in us. Touch us so that we may see from your perspective. “One thing I know, that although I was blind, now I see.” God, we believe help our unbelief. In Christ’s light we pray. Amen

Light and darkness, seeing and recognizing are themes in three of the readings this morning. John emphasizes the difference between physical and spiritual blindness, while Samuel is encouraged to see through God’s eyes. The letter to the Ephesians encourages people to live in the light of Christ. Living in the light helps us to see past our blind spots.

So the man receives his sight, although only a couple of verses are given over to the description of the miracle itself. A little spit, a little mud, a little Sabbath-breaking kneading, a washing in the pool of Siloam... and it’s done. The rest of the story is all about what happens after – and it’s all about metaphor. Jesus is the Light of the World, with echoes from the Prologue to John’s gospel, “The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.”

We can spend a lot of time questioning how this miracle happened or we can spend this time reflecting on our blindness and the mud we might need to wash away from our eyes. Jesus takes a simple physical handicap and uses it to illustrate some points about spiritual blindness.

It was common to presume that a physical disability was caused by a sin so the disciples asked: “*Who sinned this man or his parents?*” The man in the story was not blind because of any sin. Jesus was clear about this; “*neither this man nor his parents sinned.*” In our scientific world we understand that blindness is not caused by sin and rarely by genetics. We live in an enlightened world but we still discriminate and judge others.

In these biblical stories, both David and the blind man were rejected in the eyes of the world. Too young, not ready, disabled, a “sinner” in the eyes of the godly. Little has changed! We live in a divided world, where some are valued more than others. Wealth and power are in the hands of the super-rich; the one-percenters. Indigenous children still suffer from effects of the residential schools. The oppression of the Palestinians is increasing, and the refugees in Syria still struggle to survive. Some lives matter; some do not. Our world need not be like this. Faith looks beyond externals—like the colour of the skin, the physical disability, the cultural difference, the intellectual disparities—to the inner person. All are worthy of our love, our compassion, and our hospitality. God is made known in each and every person. We are all children of God When we learn to see beyond our differences, other people gain freer and fuller lives.

Jesus steps into the lives of ordinary people; last week we heard the story of the Samaritan woman at the well and this week he meets the blind man. They knew about the Messiah but they

never expected to see him. Jesus offers them life changing experiences and introduces himself as the Messiah! How would you react if Jesus stepped into your life?

Jesus has stepped into your life---- can you see how that has changed you?

There have been a lot of changes in this faith community in the past few years. I don't need to paint the picture – in your mind's eye you can see the “before” and “after” the “then” and “now”. A community that honours diversity is ready to understand and even embrace variety. It is exciting to affirm we are a Shared Ministry and all the possibilities that are ahead for us together. You have learned to see beyond the differences and realize what you have in common. Working together as one faith community enables you to be stronger together. It also gives you more opportunities to witness to your faith to this community

On Thursday we held an interesting forum about the Suffering in Palestine. A small group came for the discussion and most of them were active community folk, not from this church. They expressed their appreciation for a safe place to talk about Palestine and Israel. It was wonderful to be part of opening our doors to the world.

We are a community that is gaining the gift of sight. It reminds me of those of us who have had cataract surgery. Once you have one eye fixed the visual perspective is weird. One eye sees clearly but the other eye takes time to adapt. I had a terrible time because I could see clearly from one eye with no glasses but I couldn't read the page or see the people clearly without my glasses.

Perhaps this is a metaphor for where we are now. You have agreed to be a Shared ministry but what does that mean for your future. Some areas need focusing – the co-ownership agreement is being written, the new name is under scrutiny and the Ministry profile is in progress. The big question is *DO we have the financial resources to do what we hope to do and be*. Folks, it is a reality of life, you can dream but it usually costs money to make dreams become reality. This is why it is so important for us to be talking about stewardship NOW.

My Lenten meditation on Saturday was about Jesus speaking with the rich Pharisee. I want to read on comment:

Jesus asks the young man to search his heart and discover the one thing that he lacks. Would Jesus want you to sell everything and give the money to the poor? Probably not! But I do think that Jesus challenges us to ask ourselves the hard questions about how we are to live as his followers. Jesus challenges us to look deep into our souls for the one thing that we lack.

Am I grasping onto something that is holding me back?

Do I have something to offer that can strengthen the faith of someone else?

Learning to see through God's eyes and listening to God's promptings are “heart” skills that are nourished by the activity of the Spirit. The activity of the Spirit in our own lives and the activity of the Spirit in this faith community. Trust the capacity of God's power, embodied in Jesus Christ to open our eyes to the fullness of life.