

March 26, 2017

Sight with Eyes, Mind, and Heart

PRAYER

May the words of my mouth be meditations of our hearts, be always acceptable unto Thee. O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. AMEN

SERMON

Oftentimes, when I read the proper's for Sunday, I look for a thread that runs through all of the readings or most of the readings. Sometimes, that's more difficult to find than others. This Sunday's readings, made it fairly simple. In three of the readings anyway, we hear something about sight. We hear about Samuel's looking on the candidates for King. We hear in the Epistle about being able to see in the light and not the darkness. Certainly in the Gospel reading we hear about a blind man receiving sight for the first time and those who trusted their own sight even when it contradicted what was going on and how God was involved.

Different ways of seeing. Different ways of sight. Sight with the eyes, sight with the mind, sight even with the heart are involved in the readings for today. In the Old Testament readings, it's always been one of my favorites because of what God says to Samuel. Samuel has been a prophet for God since he was a young boy. He has served Saul the king. He is now being called upon God to anoint a new king to replace Saul. He goes as directed to Jesse in Bethlehem. And he sees the sons of Jesse. He sees the oldest, he's a kingly looking man. He's tall, he's handsome. Just looks like a king. Looks like he could rule. Looks like somebody that God would chose to put on the throne and serve the people of God. And you get, I get the feeling that Samuel is ready to okay let's anoint him. He looks good, let's do this thing.

And God says whoa, whoa, whoa. I'm glad you like him that's all fine and good but you're looking at the wrong thing. You're looking for the wrong thing. You're looking at the surface. Yeah he's tall, yeah he's handsome. But that's not what I'm looking for. You have to understand that I don't see I don't have sight the same way that you do. All that you're seeing comes from how you've experienced life. What you find good and what you find bad. What you find beautiful and what you find ugly. My sight goes beyond that, because my sight goes to the heart. I'm not looking at the surface, I'm looking at the heart of each one of these people. And I'll let you know when

I find the one. When I see the heart that is going to beat for me. I'll let you know when I see the one who's center is in me.

So just hold off. Of course, it's not until David is brought in from the fields and is brought before Samuel and God says this is the one. Now, David was said to be a very handsome man. When he was about to fight Goliath, he was going to wear Saul's armor. Saul offered his own armor. So he wasn't a runt. It wasn't that what Samuel was looking for wasn't present in David. But what God saw at the very heart of who David was, was what God wanted to rule his people. Samuel couldn't know that until he got to know who David was. He had to rely on God to say this is the one, anoint him. And you will find out. You will see, you will know, you will understand what I have seen in him that will make him a good king for my chosen people.

Trust my sight. But also develop your own. Because you too will be able to see the heart once you get to know the person. It takes time, takes effort, takes sharing stories. We all have this tendency to look at the surface and measure the person by what we know. What we have developed for ourselves. What we like. What we think is beautiful. What we think is ugly. What we think is true and what we think is false. What we value and what we don't and too often.

Like Samuel, we see someone and we make that judgment. Not knowing who they are, where they come from, what kind of life they live, what kind of life they are living, what they are aspiring to. But we make a judgment. Good, bad. Friend, enemy. And we are called by God to look deeper. And the only way for us to see deeper, the only way for us to know the heart of the person that God is looking on is to get to know them. To speak with them. To share time and space with them. To come to know who they really are. No matter what they look like. No matter if they measure up to the standards that we have set or not.

Come to know who they are. And come closer to knowing how God sees them. In the Gospel reading, we have man born blind. And the disciples ask a serious question. You see it was hell that in that time, in that place that if someone was blind or if they were lame or if they were deaf or if they couldn't speak that this was in some way a punishment from God for a sin that they had committed. Now when they hear that this particular blind man has been blind since birth. It raises a real question. Is it possible that this person committed a sin while in the womb before they were ever born? Or does this child bear the punishment for the sins of the parents. Those seem to be the only two options available when you believe that this kind of malady is a punishment for sin.

So they ask the one whose supposed to know, the rabbi, the teacher, the one that they've been following. Jesus, who sinned? This man or his parents? And Jesus answer is not very fulfilling. It raises some other questions that we never hear Jesus deal with. Because he says you know it wasn't this man that sinned and it wasn't his parents that sinned. He was born blind so that the power of God could be shone. I don't know about you but I think I might resent that just a little bit.

Having to live with blindness all my life until Jesus finally came by and decided to give me my sight. But again Jesus doesn't address it and now neither will I. But he says this can change. This can be healed. And so he does. How our God is shone. A man born blind as he himself never in the history of humanity has anybody heard of someone being born blind being giving his sight.

He is the center of attention. Everybody wants to know what's going on. They see this man that has been by the side of the road for as long as they can remember. Begging because he couldn't work, couldn't see. All he could do was rely on the gifts, the charity of others. And even they can't decide exactly who this person is now. Well that's the man that was born blind isn't it? Said well yeah you know we passed by him all the time, that's definitely him. Others say oh no can't be him because this kind of thing just doesn't happen. They're used to their own sight, to their own eyes.

Now he's changed, now he's different. Is it the same person? We don't know. What's going on? We don't know. Some of them are probably a little skittish. Here I passed by this man day after day. And I haven't contributed, haven't helped and now he can see my face. Does that make a difference? Others say yeah I've seen him. I've helped him, that's definitely him. I don't know what's going on but now I don't have to give him any money anymore.

Pharisees see it. They have their own set of eyes. Their own sight about who this is and what's going on. Yeah, he received his sight but wow it was on the Sabbath day. And we know that people of God don't work on the Sabbath day. That's part of who we are, we don't do that. God doesn't want us to do that. So this can't be of God. We made the interpretation, we see what happened. Has to be something else going on here. That's why they had to question him over and over again. Who gave you your sight? Why did this happen? What did you have to do? What did he do? What's going on?

Even the parents are afraid of what the Pharisees see. Well he's your son, is this your son? Yeah, we know this is our son and yeah, we know he was born blind. Unless he's been conning us for all these years. I just added that part (laughter). Yeah, he was born blind. But you know, you'll have to ask him. He's old enough, ask him yourself. We don't want to answer for him because we don't want to get kicked out of the synagogue. That's what they're seeing. That is what their sight is set on. We want to be part of the chosen people here. We don't want to get thrown out of the synagogue.

Everybody has their own set of eyes looking at this man. And so they ask him again what's going on? Said I can't tell you exactly who this guy is. I can't tell you if he's sinned or not. All I can tell you is, he put this bun on my eyes. He told me to go wash, I did what he told me to do. I can see now. Let's celebrate. I see life in a new way, I see new possibility. My sight has changed about who I am about what life is about.

About what I can do now. This is a time of celebration. And what does he get for celebrating, he's thrown out of the synagogue. Because he doesn't meet with the sight of the Pharisees, this can't be from God. How do you see? How do you see the world around you? We've all been raised to look for certain things and say that's good. That's not good. That life-giving, that's not life-giving. What do you see when you look around? When you look around here in this place, what do you see?

Brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors. What do you see when you go out into the world? Do you judge what's going on by what happens in your set of standards? Do you see anything beneath the surface? Do you try to get to know and understand in spite of the initial judgements of what you've seen?

There was a priest many years ago, I heard preach. And what she said has always stuck with me. Said we judge people by their actions. What they actually do and the effect that it has on me. But I want to be judged not by how you see what I've done but what I intended to do. Yeah, difference? Sometimes unintentionally, we'll hurt somebody. We'll say something that hurts them, their feelings. We'll do something unintentionally that bothers them, hurts them, puts up a fence between us and them and if it finally comes to our attention. Well I didn't, that's not what I did. I may have said it but I didn't mean to hurt you with it.

I want you to see it from my intention. I have good intentions. In the South, they say well you know he has a good heart. It doesn't matter what terrible thing he's just done. He's got a good heart. Or it doesn't matter

what good thing he's just done, he or she is the wrong color, wrong religion. Done the wrong thing. Therefore, this new thing doesn't count. How do we see it? Do we ever take the time to stop, to talk, to share, to look beyond the surface about what happened or what was said? And get to the heart of the intention and it maybe yeah sometimes I see people try to hurt other people. You bet. By what they say, by what they do. More often I see people hurt because of what they think is going on. If they would just take the time to get to know the person. To talk to them, to understand, to look at the heart as God sees them. Then things could be forgiven. The hurt could be let go and the relationship could be built.

We go through our lives with our sight. With our eyes. With our minds. With our hearts. God calls us to look deeper beyond the surface, beyond the words to the meanings. It's difficult, we hear that God sees one way, we see another. We say well I can't be God, I can't see the way God sees, I can't look into the heart of someone else. And know and understand exactly who they are. Or what they are. And yet God says...try. Make an effort. Don't go on the surface, you might be surprised with what you find. Instead of an enemy, you might find a friend. And a companion. Instead of something ugly, you might find a spirit as beautiful as you will ever find. May we make a commitment as God's children to take the time to look deeper. To come to know one another at the level of the heart. That we might truly live out being God's children and citizens of God's kingdom.