

**FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT: YEAR A**

1 Samuel 16:1-13  
 Psalm 23  
 Ephesians 5:8-14  
 John 9:1-41

**MARCH 19, 2023**  
 St. David's Church  
 N. Chesterfield, VA  
 Ruth Partlow

JOHN 9 GIVES WITNESS TO ONE MAN'S CONVERSION – FROM NO FAITH TO FAITH IN JESUS AND TO AFFIRMING IT AS HE SAYS, “LORD I BELIEVE”. IT'S THE FEAST OF THE TABERNACLES – ALSO CALLED “THE FESTIVAL OF THE BOOTHS” BECAUSE EACH HOUSEHOLD BUILDS A LITTLE BOOTH TO LIVE IN DURING THE FESTIVAL.

A GREAT MOMENT OF THE FESTIVAL COMES WHEN IN THE TEMPLE, A HUGE CANDELABRA IS LIT – SYMBOLIZING GOD'S LIGHT AND PRESENCE. JESUS USES THIS EVENT TO MAKE A POINT ABOUT WHO HE IS:

*“I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. WHOEVER FOLLOWS ME WILL NEVER WALK IN DARKNESS BUT WILL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE.”* (John 8:12)

JESUS, LIKE THE SHIMMERING CANDELABRA, EQUATES HIMSELF WITH BEING THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

THE HEALING OF THE BLIND MAN ILLUSTRATES WHO JESUS IS – AND THE IMPORTANCE OF VISION AND LIGHT. IT'S A CONCRETE, PHYSICAL STATEMENT OF WHO JESUS IS – “I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.” AS HE BRINGS LIGHT AND LIFE TO THE BLIND MAN. HE ALSO BRINGS LIGHT AND LIFE TO EACH OF US.

WHEN JESUS SAYS “I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD “-- HE IS EQUATING HIMSELF WITH GOD – THE GOD OF THE BURNING BUSH. REMEMBER? IT WAS THE LIGHT OF A BURNING BUSH IN THE DESERT THAT DREW MOSES TO AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD. IT WAS THERE GOD SPOKE OUT OF THE BURNING BUSH, AND COMMISSIONED MOSES TO LEAD HIS PEOPLE OUT OF EGYPTIAN BONDAGE TELLING THE PEOPLE THAT – ‘I AM’-- “EGO EIMI” SENT ME - (Ex. 3:14) IN JOHN'S GOSPEL JESUS IS USING THIS SAME PHRASE – “I AM” -- “EGO EIMI” TO SPEAK OF HIMSELF-- THUS EQUATING HIMSELF WITH GOD..

JESUS SMEARED MUD MIXED WITH SALIVA ON THE BLIND MAN'S EYES; AND SENT HIM TO THE POOL OF SILOAM TO WASH. THIS POOL IS KNOWN FOR ITS HEALING PROPERTIES. SO THIS COMMAND SEEMED NATURAL TO THOSE WATCHING. ONCE HE WASHED, THE BLIND MAN RECEIVED HIS VISION. HE WAS HEALED.

THE MAN'S FAITH IN JESUS BEGAN TO GROW. HE WITNESSES TO THE BYSTANDERS THAT HE WAS INDEED THE ONE WHO BORN BLIND. HE TELLS OF HIS HEALING; ANSWERING THEIR QUESTIONS, "WHO HEALED YOU?" HE REPLIED, "THE MAN CALLED JESUS," "THE MAN CALLED JESUS."

THE CROWD TOOK HIM TO THE PHARISEES WHO INTERROGATED HIM ABOUT HIS HEALING. THEY'RE MORE UPSET BECAUSE JESUS HEALED HIM ON THE SABBATH AND BROKE THE SABBATH LAW. THEY'RE SO CAUGHT UP IN FOLLOWING THE LAW THEY MISS THE GIFT OF HEALING!. THEY'RE MORE WORRIED ABOUT THE LAW AND WHO JESUS IS THAN THE MIRACLE BEFORE THEIR EYES. AS THIS LINE OF QUESTIONING PROGRESSES, THE MAN GROWS IN HIS OWN UNDERSTANDING OF WHO JESUS -- HE IS MORE THAN A MAN -- HE IS A PROPHET

FRUSTRATED, THE PHARISEES DRAG THE MAN'S PARENTS INTO THE SYNAGOGUE FOR QUESTIONING. THEY ARE FILLED WITH FEAR AND THEY ONLY ANSWER, "OUR SON IS OF AGE AND HE MUST SPEAK FOR HIMSELF."

ONCE AGAIN THE PHARISEES QUESTION THE MAN WHO NOW SEES THAT JESUS-- IS A MAN FROM GOD - SOMEONE TO FOLLOW. ENRAGED THE PHARISEES ACCUSE HIM OF BEING A DISCIPLE AND DRIVE HIM OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

JESUS THEN FINDS THE MAN AND ASKS HIM, "DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE SON OF MAN?"

THE MAN ASKS, "WHO IS HE?"

JESUS REPLIES, "YOU HAVE SEEN HIM; THE ONE SPEAKING WITH YOU IS HE."  
HEARING THIS THE MAN ONCE BLIND, FALLS DOWN AND WORSHIPS JESUS.

WE'VE WATCHED THIS MAN GROW FROM BLINDNESS TO SIGHT, , FROM NO BELIEF IN JESUS TO RECOGNITION OF WHO JESUS IS.

FROM NO FAITH TO FAITH;

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.

FROM SIMPLY A MAN TO THE SON OF MAN AND THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD!!!.

THIS GOSPEL IS A BEAUTIFUL ILLUSTRATION OF OUR OWN GROWTH IN FAITH. IT HAPPENS BIT BY BIT. IT'S A JOURNE UNTIL WE'RE QUITE READY TO HEAR IT ALL AT ONCE.

THE ENGLISH POET EMILY DICKINSON UNDERSTOOD THIS CONCEPT. IN A POEM ENTITLED **“TELL ALL THE TRUTH, BUT TELL IT SLANT,** SHE WROTE:

**THE TRUTH MUST DAZZLE GRADUALLY.... OR EVERY MAN BE BLIND--**

WE CANNOT ALWAYS BEAR THE FULL TRUTH ALL AT ONCE. SOMETIMES IT NEEDS TO COME SLOWLY, GRADUALLY – JUST AS IT DID FOR THE BLIND MAN.

THIS STORY IS ABOUT SO MUCH MORE THAN A PHYSICAL HEALING. IT ABOUT OUR OWN SPIRITUAL GROWTH – THE PROCESS OF COMING TO KNOW JESUS. IT'S ABOUT OUR STORY TOO AS WE GO FROM

– NOT KNOWING JESUS – TO KNOWING HIM

– FROM UNBELIEVER – TO BELIEVER

– FROM NO FAITH – TO LOVE AND TRUST IN JESUS.

IT'S A PICTURE GOD AT WORK IN OUR LIVES, OF JESUS IN OUR LIVES!!!. IT'S ABOUT THE LIGHT OF CHRIST WORKING IN YOU AND ME.

THE PHARISEES AND THE MAN'S PARENTS GIVE US AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ARE NOT OPEN TO GOD'S NEW WORK: WHEN WE HOLD ON TO TRADITION, CLING TO THE PAST, TO THE FAMILIAR. THEY WERE AFRAID TO FACE THE TRUTH, TO DEVIATE FROM THE RULES. AS A RESULT, THEY MISSED THE MIRACLE OF

THE HEALING! AND THUS BECAME BLIND TO GOD'S LOVE AND WORK RIGHT IN THEIR MIDST..

IT'S EASY TO FALL INTO THIS TRAP' TO BE BLIND TO WHAT GOD IS DOING RIGHT NOW. WE NEED TO LET 'THE LIGHT OF CHRIST'" COME IN AND TOUCH OUR PLACES OF BLINDNESS – THOSE PLACES DEEP WITHIN THAT NEED GOD'S HEALING TOUCH.

ONCE I TOOK A PASTORS CLASS AND MET A MAN WHO. DUE TO AN INJURY IN VIETNAM CONTRACTED GLAUCOMA AS A RESULT CLYDE WAS BLIND I MARVELED AT HIS PATIENCE, TENACITY, HIS ENERGY. HE SHARED WITH US THAT HE EVEN "DROVE" HIS CAR A LITTLE IN HIS DRIVEWAY – BACKING UP AND DRIVING FORWARD! HE SHOWED A VIDEO OF HIM SKIING IN COLORADO WITH OTHER DISABLED VETERANS.

ALTHOUGH HE WAS BLIND, CLYDE IS WHOLE. HE FACED HIS DISABILITY WITH A CHEERFUL, POSITIVE ATTITUDE. HE IS A MAN OF DETERMINATION, GRIT, AND DEEP FAITH. SINCE BECOMING BLIND, HE HAS TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO EQUIP HIMSELF FOR LIVING WITH BLINDNESS-- EVEN EARNING A MASTER OF DIVINITY FROM A BIBLE COLLEGE AND A PhD. HE VOLUNTEERS AT THE VA HOSPITAL AND WORKS WITH BLIND VETERANS IN MARYLAND, VIRGINIA, AND D.C. HE'S AN ASSISTANT MINISTER AT HIS CHURCH AND HAS LEARNED TO WRITE HIS SERMONS IN BRAILLE.

HERE IS A MAN WHO, THOUGH BLIND, SEES MORE CLEARLY THAN MANY OF US WHO ARE SIGHTED. HE HAS PLACED HIS FAITH AND TRUST IN JESUS CHRIST. HE ALLOWS THE LIGHT OF CHRIST TO SHINE FORTH TO OTHERS. HE IS A LIGHT OF CHRIST SHINING IN THIS SOMETIMES DARK, FEARSOME WORLD.

MAY WE BE STRENGTHENED IN OUR LIFE'S JOURNEYS AS WE REFLECT THE EXAMPLE OF CLYDE AND THE STORY OF THE BLIND MAN. MAY WE SEE THEM AS

EXAMPLES OF GROWING IN OUR FAITH – INTO WHOLENESS. MAY WE LET JESUS  
BRING HEALING AND NEW SIGHT INTO OUR LIVES.

LET’S SING TOGETHER:

*OPEN OUR EYES LORD, WE WANT TO SEE JESUS*  
*TO REACH OUT AND TOUCH HIM AND TELL HIM WE LOVE HIM*  
*OPEN OUR EARS LORD AND TEACH US TO LISTEN*  
*OPEN EYES LORD, WE WANT TO SEE JESUS.*

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THE POEM BY EMILY DICKINSON:

*“Tell all the Truth but tell it slant”*

Tell all the Truth but tell it slant---  
Success in Circuit lies  
Too bright for our infirm Delight  
The Truth's superb surprise  
As Lightening to the Children eased  
With explanation kind  
The Truth must dazzle gradually  
Or every man be blind---

**Emily Dickinson**