

4 Lent Yr. A: A New Seeing

1 Samuel 16:1-13, Ephesians 5:8-14, John 9:1-13, 28-38

The Rev. Paul D. Allick, The Church of the Advent, March 22, 2020

I did not see this coming. I did not *want* to see this coming. As far back as a month and half ago people in my life were asking me to consider that we might end up in a situation like this due to the Coronavirus. I didn't want to look at that, so I didn't hear it.

From the Sunday we were asked to suspend the use of the common chalice to the current shelter in place order, I've come along kicking and fussing.

And so here we are. We are being compelled to look at our lives. To consider what we have and what we've lost. We are being pressed to look inside ourselves and sort through our reactions to this chaos. It is difficult in this time to escape at least some important self-reflection.

I keep saying to myself, "This Lent just got very real." We have indeed entered the desert with Jesus.

In today's Gospel the pharisees cannot see what the blind man sees. They did not want to see. It is hard for those of us who know it all to see new things.

The Pharisees knew their religious observance inside and out. They could not imagine that they had anything new to learn. The only role they could see for themselves was to teach and admonish others.

Despite eye-witnesses and the healed man himself, they could not see the miracle in front of them.

It was a Sabbath day. Work was forbidden, even a miraculous healing. That was the rule. That is how it had always been.

When the healed man is brought to them, they do not celebrate, they revile him, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.”

The healed man who has seen the Kingdom come among them, answered, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.”

When Jesus learns that they have driven him out, he invites the healed man into the fullness of seeing, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him.

The healed man sees because of the grace of Jesus Christ. Unlike the Pharisees, he knows that he doesn't know it all. He sees now that it is not our will that we depend on but on God's will. The healed man understands that his assumptions do not rule the universe. God is ruler of heaven and earth. In Jesus Christ, God has crashed through the barrier between heaven and earth and brought us real life!

On our own, we are unable to see as God sees. As the Lord said to Samuel as Samuel is blinded by all his assumptions of what the next King of Israel *should* look like, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

I see what I want to see. God sees the heart of all things. I see what I want to see about God, myself and others. My sight is limited by my sinful heart that attaches to rules and assumptions rather than to love and compassion.

The Good News is that in Jesus Christ we can learn to see as God sees. In our baptism Jesus rubbed mud and saliva on the eyes of our souls.

St. Paul writes to the Ephesians, "Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light."

In this time of isolation as we are asked to stay put for the safety of others and for a workable capacity of our health care system, let's not waste it. Let's take all this time we thought we thought you never had and ponder what God is showing us. Pray. Reflect. Breathe.

Let's really see what is in front of us and within us. Take a good long look. Let's not waste this Lenten Season assuming that because it doesn't look the way it should that it isn't happening.

This Lent just got very real.

Here is a prayer from the Franciscan Breviary to repeat as we walk through this desert. (It will be sent out with this sermon.)

"Eternal God, give us insight to discern your will for us, to give up what harms us, and to seek the perfection we are promised in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Daily Office SSF, Bloomsbury Continuum, London, 2019, p. 568