

3-22-20 (4th Lent)

Open my Eyes that I May See

By Rev. Sheryl Stewart

1 Samuel 16: 1-13

Ephesians 5: 8-14

John 9: 1-41

Psalms 23

Summary: I don't fear my blindness or my healing; I need the courage to follow the One I see. My tomb opens Easter Sunday.

Two weeks ago, Don spoke about human fear and this more mental and spiritual anxiety, as opposed to animal terror, is what I tend to confront during Lent. As I think of giving up habits that take me from God and walking more deliberately in ways pleasing to my Father, a snaky fear rises to trouble me.

“What if,” my mind whispers, “God asks you to go somewhere, do something, be someone that you really don't want?” Already, I know this fear is credible: Jonah springs immediately to mind with Job right behind him. There is Gideon, cowering in the wine press and called to be a mighty warrior. Peter is told flat out by Jesus, “When you were young, you went where you wanted, when you are old, men will bind you and take you where you wish not, for my sake,”

Samuel, grieving Saul's fall from grace, was afraid to go anoint David and the story of his selection of the right man underlines the fact that God sees beneath the surface and into the truth of his children. Paul, speaking about being an imitator

of God, warns that those who want to walk in light cannot continue to please themselves with any darkness they formerly loved.

Then, there is the long Gospel account of the healing of the man born blind. Here, the very pundits who say they see and understand God's way are proven more blind than the man who was healed and dared confess his faith despite being thrown out of the synagogue.

“Sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble: were you there when they crucified my Lord?” I don't want to say “No” to God when He has said “Yes” to me. I don't want to be a blind guide saying, “I see.” Yet, although my human fears may be credible, they are not true.

God has said, “You know the plans I have for you, plans to help and not harm.” God knows the desires of our hearts; who, after all, put them there in the first place? Jesus reminds us that we, who are only human, will not give the son who asks for bread a stone nor the daughter who wants a fish a snake. Finally, the Son of God says, “I go to prepare a place for you that you might be with me, and if it were not so, I would have told you.”

My fears are not true. Satan may have tempted Jesus with a precipice, but if God takes me to a cliff and asks me to step off, one of two things will happen when

my feet hit the air. Either his angels will bear me up or I shall be given wings to fly, and God himself will be the wind beneath my wings.

So, I don't fear my blindness or my healing; I need the courage to follow the One I see. And, like the blind man touched by Jesus who told Him "Now, I see men like trees walking," I also see, but not clearly yet. I need Him to touch me again. My tomb opens Easter Sunday and I will be touched yet again on Pentecost.

This is the glorious and eternal cycle of the Christian year. As we walk it, our feet must, of necessity, pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Those who are of the shadow try not to fear by striving to be the worst son of a gun in the whole darn valley. We, however, do not fear, for the Good Shepherd is with us with His rod for defense and His staff for rescue.

And, as we are anointed by the cup of His sacrifice, goodness and mercy will follow us, all the days of our lives. This promise is not what we will get from life but is what we can give to our world. As a wake follows a boat, so will goodness and mercy follow the lives following Jesus. Crosses become empty tombs, and we will dwell in the house of our Lord forever. Let's go forth in hope, Easter is coming and so is Jesus.