

4th Sunday of Lent [A], 2023

(Regina Coeli & OSF)

A blind man is walking down the street with his guide dog one day. They come to a busy intersection and the dog, ignoring the high volume of traffic zooming down the street, leads the blind man right into the thick of the traffic. This is followed by a screech of tires as panicked drivers try desperately not to run the pair down. Horns blaring, the blind man and the dog finally reach the safety of the sidewalk on the other side of the street, and the blind man pulls a biscuit out of his coat pocket and offers it to the dog. A passerby, who had observed the near fatal accident, can't control his amazement and says to the blind man, "Why on earth are you rewarding your dog with a treat? He nearly got you killed!" The blind man turns partially in his direction and replies, "to find out where his head is, so I can kick his rear end!"

Outside of the proclamation of the Passion on Palm Sunday, this is the longest Gospel in the 3-year cycle of Sunday Scripture readings. It is the entire 9th chapter of John. It's a fascinating story of a miracle, both physical and spiritual, with a whole cast of players.

It's all about eyesight, the ability to see. What a precious gift that is. (first grade, lasik story)

Really, aren't we all blind in some way? We live in a world where people are quick to judge by appearances. If someone is dressed shabbily or their hair or grooming is not what we consider "normal" or they have tattoos and piercings, or their skin is a different color from ours, we may make some judgments about the kind of person they are. It is only when we take the time to discover the person behind the face, that we can appreciate God's creativity, wisdom and love.

Our God is a God of *all* cultures—and that is a truth that many of us have not taken to heart. We are all here—not just in this church, but in this world—we are all here because God decided to create us in his image and likeness in this place and this time in history. We are all precious to him, regardless of our race, our ethnic background, our intelligence, our age, our gender, our sexual orientation. None of that matters to God. We are His!

The Gospel this morning has many characters in it, but it all centers around a man who was blind until he met Jesus. And that meeting brought him not only the ability to literally “see the light,” but the ability to see all kinds of things, that not even the people around him could see, not even his own parents.

The blind man in the gospel had a hard time convincing anyone that he was no longer blind. It seems so difficult for people to accept that someone is different, has changed, even if the difference is for the better. We are comfortable when we think we have people all figured out. But that’s not always the way it is. During this season we talk a lot about conversion, change of heart, and yet I fear we don’t always believe it is possible.

How do we deal with people who are trying to change their lives? Are we supportive or deflating? How do we deal with those who do not understand **our** change of heart? How can we explain the spiritual significance of our faith to a world that is not willing to look deeper than the surface? How can we be more patient and tolerant with people trying to prove they have changed?

What a shame if at 75 I am no different than I was at 25! And yet we often make those judgments about others! The Lord Jesus can and does work miracles in each of us, if like this blind man, we are open to his power and cooperate with that power.

St. Paul certainly knew all about that... His blinding experience on the road to Damascus, changed his life forever. He saw the light in the face of Jesus. And in today's beautiful passage from his letter to the Ephesians, Paul reminds us that **we are light**—notice, not “in the light,” but the light itself: “Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.” And then the obvious conclusion: “So live as children of the light, producing every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth.” There is plenty of room in the Kingdom for people with blind **eyes**, but there is no room in the Kingdom for people with blind **hearts**, who cannot be light for others!