

A New Vision Captured through many Eyes  
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First Congregational United Church of Christ  
Mark 10:46-52  
October 25, 2015

PRAYER:

Let us pray,

Holy One, we do believe that your love extends to the whole world, to every person, and into every situation. We believe that you are everywhere present, working with all creation for its restoration. Help us to see, God. Help us to see, with open eyes and open hearts, help us to see the broken places of the world. And at the same time, help us to see, always, the possibilities of hope as shown through the life and ministry of Jesus. Amen.

SCRIPTURE:

Mark 10:46-52

<sup>46</sup>They came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. <sup>47</sup>When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here."

And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.

Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again."

Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed Jesus on the way.

SERMON:

Earlier we heard the question: "What do you want me to do for you?"

And then the response: "My teacher, let me see again."

"Go; your faith has made you well." And immediately the blind man regained his sight and followed Jesus.

To see for the very first time... Have you ever wondered what that would be like? I still remember the first day I got my glasses. It was in the autumn of my 13<sup>th</sup> year. I recall leaving the optometrist office and looking up into the trees and just marveling at all the twigs up there! I had no idea! I stood there awestruck! I am not sure how long! Wonder and delight just took me over! Suddenly the world had a whole new dimension!

Clarity of sight is a true blessing, that is for sure! But, what would it be like to gain the gift of sight after a lifetime of darkness? Would it be a blessing? Or, a surprising challenge?

In his book, *Crashing Through*, Rob Kurson chronicles the journey of Mike May who regained his sight after a lifetime of darkness. In the book we learn that a childhood accident blinded Mike, but his disability never limited him. He drove motorcycles, hiked, and even went downhill skiing.

Then, Mike's doctors told him a stem cell and cornea transplant could restore his sight. And so, he signed up for the surgery, but soon discovered seeing wasn't necessarily believing.

Mike struggled with his new gift. He had trouble differentiating between men and women. Colors and patterns fascinated him, but his brain had forgotten how to process images. It became so difficult making sense out of all the visual information Mike even resorted to skiing with his eyes firmly shut! It helped him to keep his mind focused. All those images flashing into his brain proved to be too much.

For Mike, vision wasn't the blessing he had hoped for.

As Kursen writes, "Vision was not calling to Mike. He knew that the idea of a blind man refusing sight would strike most of the world as unthinkable. But he thought of it this way: What if a sighted person was offered a new sense? What if he was offered, say, the ability to foretell the future? At first, that prospect might seem thrilling. But if the person was already leading a full and rich life, would he or she really want it? Might it not disrupt an otherwise wonderful life? And what if it turned out to be something wholly different from what the person had bargained for?"

Yes, the gift of vision proved to be too much for Mike to handle, on his own.

Perhaps you can resonate with his challenge, because sometimes, sometimes our eyes take in images and realities our minds cannot comprehend or accept as real or right. Images that leave our brains dazed, saddened, utterly reeling.

- We watch in horror as college campuses and schoolyards and movie theaters and neighborhoods are torn apart by senseless acts of hatred, racism, and wanton violence and we don't know what to do.
- We see images from the Middle East that are anything but Holy and our heart aches for the millions who are victims of political and religious power-mongering and interminable animosity that has suffocated that region for centuries.
- We look with concern at young people on our streets living in the doorways of our downtown shops, without purpose and a questionable future and we avert our gaze and move on.
- And we wonder where to turn for answers when we look upon the stricken face of a dear one after telling her that a little friend has died.

These are some of the things we see, and frankly, it is tempting to just close our eyes and hope it all goes away.

But, we mustn't.

In *The Sacred Meal*, a book about how faith connects us to one another, author Nora Gallagher offers, "I remember thinking as I worked in the soup kitchen that I didn't want to know what I was learning. Because then my life couldn't go on in the same way as it had before: driving around in my nice red car, (Boy that hit close to home) thinking about what new linens to buy. What we learn we cannot unlearn," she says. "What we see, we cannot unsee." I believe we are challenged to not to give into the temptation to look away but to search for and by the light of our faith to find our way through together.

Such is the journey of faith.

Rev. Dr. Kimberleigh Buchanan puts it this way, “It's much easier to focus only on the happy parts of faith--God's love for everyone, God's desire for our well-being, the hope we find in God. But faith doesn't involve only the happy parts, does it?”

“A mature faith also engages the hard things...things like suffering, betrayal, and death, and poverty and human trafficking and corporate corruption and climate change and hunger and domestic violence. All faith looks on the happy parts of life. Mature faith dares to look at the hard parts, too.”

And that is why we are here isn't it?

Together, we are searching to find our way in this world, offering hands of support to those who have lost their way or who can no longer lift their burden alone. Together, we are leaning out over the edge of what is known to discover the hope-filled promise of God's vision for this world, our church, and our lives.

Together, we are daring to look at all of life through the many eyes, and minds, and hearts that make up this community. That is why I am so excited about our efforts to Build a Church for All Generations. I believe it is through our faith and the eyes of many that we shall truly see.

- To see beyond the now, we *need* the eyes of our experienced ones who offer perspective and wisdom and comfort.
- To see beyond our pain, we *need* the eyes of our young ones who still see the world as one filled with so much promise and delight and possibility.
- To see our greater purpose, we *need* the eyes of the compassionate ones who are not afraid to look at what is real and imagine what might be.

Yes, we are Building a Church for All Generations because the insight we desire, the vision we need, is made real through many eyes.

What might we discover together?  
What might we see for the first time?  
May God open our eyes to see!  
Amen.