

The Eyes of Christ

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

Last week I was driving to Church over to St. Mark and I was heading up York Street into the center of town, when all of a sudden a car comes roaring up behind me at one of the lights. Have you ever had that feeling like the car behind you is not going to stop. I am sitting at the red light and this car comes zooming up, lickity-split, and I was looking in my rearview mirror and saying I hope they stop, I hope they stop, I hope they STOP! You start to wonder does the person even see you sitting there, do they see it's a red light, why are they coming up behind me so fast. Finally the car did stop and the light changed and we went through the intersection all safe and sound. But then at the chestnut intersection, the roaring rumbling car flew up to the stop squeeling on the brakes in the turn lane next to me, since I was going straight. As the car rumbled and roared up next to me I glanced over at the driver, just to see who this is driving this crazy way. And there was this teenager looking back at me with cool dark sunglasses on and smiling this big grin, waiting for his chance to spin the car out turning the corner. Now did I mention this was almost 7:00 at night. No wonder he was driving a little crazy, he couldn't see too well, just wanting to be cool and revving the engine, and going fast all the while wearing dark sunglasses obscuring his vision especially at night.

I would suppose that many of us here would think that driving through Hanover at night with Sunglasses on would be a little unsafe. I have problems enough at night without sunglasses on to see the road and other things. My eyes are getting older, I wear strong prescription contacts and without them I can only see shapes and colors, but everything is a blue. So to see clearly is important when driving and when we do many other things.

But I wonder how many of us go through life with sunglasses on - figuratively speaking at least. We think we can see but we are limited. We open our eyes and light passes through the CORNEA to the center of the IRIS or the PUPIL which reflects backwards upside down to the RETINA CONES which take that image and runs it up our OPTIC NERVE to the brain which reinterprets what we see flips the image, colorizes it and places it back the right way showing us exactly what it is we are looking at. And of course all this happens in the split millionth of a second so that we when we open our eyes or move around, or glance right or left, we see instantly and comprehend what is in our field of vision. Truly amazing, really!

But our eyes are still imperfect, limited, judgmental, faulty and weak. There are many things that hinder us from truly seeing clearly, like wearing shades over our eyes, we see the

shapes and know we see, but with dimness and sometimes wrongly. Our human eyes show us upside down and backwards images that have to run through our human brains to show us the correct image. And when our human brains get involved in flipping the images and giving them details we also have our human biases, judgments, emotions and opinions. In our human sinfulness we each have biases raised within us and we can fight the urge to not judge and not get angry, or resentful, or pity, or whatever, but even as we are trying our best to not think about those things we end up thinking about them. We see someone and we judge them before we know them. We see a dilapidated home and we make an opinion about the people that live there. Just look at how advertisers appeal to people, the base carnal images they use to get your attention, they know it works because we run those images of what we see through our imperfect sinful minds.

So thank goodness our text tells us that the Lord doesn't see like we do. Right there in our first reading, with my imperfect eyes I can read verse 7, that says, "But the Lord said to Samuel, '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.'"

Isn't that comforting, the Lord doesn't see like humans see. The Lord doesn't have to deal with the iris and the pupil allowing in the light that reflects the image off the retina to the brain. Instead the Lord sees the heart, he sees with clarity and understanding. He sees with wisdom and righteousness beyond what we look at with our imperfect, up-side down seeing human eyes.

Thank goodness the Lord doesn't see like we do. The Lord is able to see the heart of a king in David, the youngest of Jesse's family. The Lord sees opposite of what every one there in Bethlehem thought when Samuel came to anoint the new king. Surely it would be the strongest, the bravest, the tallest, the oldest, but that is our human eyes seeing everything backwards. What God sees is much more important, he sees David, the boy who will be king, the boy who will establish Jerusalem as the holy City, the Boy that will make Israel a strong nation. The boy who will become begin a line of descendants that leads right to Christ himself, God coming in human form to show us again the image of seeing with the heart and not the iris or pupil or brain.

Jesus, the Son of God, God incarnate, tries to tell us this way of seeing, but we still have problems hearing. He preaches a sermon out in the country, and points out everything that is backwards in our human way of seeing. "Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God, Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled, blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh." Backwards to us, but right in God's eyes.

Also out there in the wilderness, Jesus tells his disciples to feed the 5,000 men and even more women and children, with just five loaves of bread and two fish. In the eyes of the disciples and every human being living this is impossible, upside down logic, that thousands can be feed with one bag lunch. But its right in God's eyes, and everyone eats and is filled with twelve baskets left over.

Jesus calls his disciples not from the rich, the powerful, the famous, as humans would view the reasonable choices to be made from. Instead Jesus goes to the untrained, smelly fishermen, to the traitorous tax collectors, to a known demon-possessed, unclean, woman of the streets, to a murderous Jewish rabbi named Sual, and calls them to follow and shows them a new way of seeing.

Jesus heals the sick, the lame, the blind and the deaf, he makes the dead live again. All these things are in our eyes impossible, backwards, upside down even. A lame man paralyzed laying on a stretcher is prayed over and he rises and walks when Jesus commands. A deaf and mute man can not speak or hear but with one word he is healed. A widow's son, being carried out of the city for his burial, is touched by Jesus and he rises up and lives again. Lazarus a man who had become sick and died and buried in his grave for four days, is called back into life by Jesus. Unbelievable by the way we see things. But right in God's eyes.

Even here in our Gospel reading a blind man, born that way is healed right before everyone's eyes, and yet they can not believe it, because they can not see the power of Christ and understand it. Our gospel reading tonight was only eleven verses long, but this story actually goes on through the entire chapter, 41 verses long. This is the longest healing story in the Gospels, because the people could not see, could not believe, could not comprehend what Jesus had done and understand it. It was impossible, it turned everything upside down, it was backwards from everything they knew. The blind man that was healed was brought before his neighbors who questioned him about what had happened, they then bring the man before the Pharisees to try to understand what had happened, they bring the man's own family, his parents there to bear witness and explain what had happened. Again and again they ask the man to explain himself until finally Jesus hears of the hardship and questioning the man is going through and goes to find the man once again and explains to the Pharisees once more what he has done. And yet they do not see or understand what Jesus has done and what he continues to do. They just can't see it with their eyes and believe because it is backwards. But in God's eyes it is right.

I am truly glad God doesn't see like we do. It is wonderful that the Lord's eyes see beyond what we see and comprehends, that Christ sees with a loving heart and a gracious forgiving mind, giving us hope and assuredness of his love even when it seems backwards to the way we see

things. Thank goodness Christ sees us not like we see each other with sins and with imperfections, but with love and grace. Let us give thanks tonight that Christ doesn't see us like a backwards, upside down human only seeing the outward appearance, but as God does seeing our hearts and loving us fully now and forever in his kingdom. Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come. AMEN.