



Bible Study Fourth Sunday of Lent Year A

St. Maria Goretti and
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Parishes

March 26, 2017
Volume 1 Issue 17

Then Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind." John 9:31 (NABRE)

Reading I: 1 Samuel 16: 1b, 6-7, 10-13a

A FAITH THAT ENLIGHTENS - LET ME SEE WHAT YOU SEE? A nine year old child drew a picture of Jesus healing a blind man. When asked what she thought Jesus was feeling when he healed the man, she said, "He might be singing because when Jesus saw someone in trouble His heart skipped a beat." Many of us suffer acute blindness and need Jesus to heal our blindness. Blindness of the soul or spiritual blindness is worse than physical blindness. We are on a constant journey to open our eyes to the realities of life. We must seek enlightenment because hatred, racism and mistrust are the children of blindness. Intolerance comes from blind intellect that pursues a single selfish outcome. Our goal is to see as God sees.



LORD, LET ME SEE?

After their liberation from Egypt, the Israelites had no central government. They saw themselves as twelve tribes, not as one nation. God raised up Judges to unify them during times of distress. Samuel was the last of the Judges. At the Israelites' insistence, God had Samuel anoint Saul as king. Saul's disobedience allowed an evil spirit to envelope him (1 Sam. 15:24-25). God directed the anointing of another king from Jesse's sons (16:1). This was God's sovereign selection. It was not a king according to appearances, or the desires of Israel (v. 1 Gal. 4:4-5). Samuel judged Jesse's sons by their external qualities, just as the Israelites judged Saul acceptable because of external qualities (v. 6). God evaluates people on the basis of their hearts (affections), not their appearances or abilities (v. 7, Matt 3:17; Mark 10:31; 1 Cor. 1:27). Neither Jesse nor Samuel had God's vision for Israel. Samuel privately anointed David, his dynasty lasted 500 years. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** What did God see in David that Jesse did not see? Do you see what God sees in others?

VISION

Psychologists find that man is prevalingly and persistently "eye-minded." That is, in his waking life he is likely to think, imagine and remember in terms of vision. Naturally then, his dreaming is predominantly visual; so strongly visual, we are told, that it is not rare to find dreams defined as "trains of fantastic images." Whether man was made this way in order that God might communicate with him through dreams and visions is hardly worth debating; if the records of human life, in the Bible and out of it, are to be trusted at all, there is nothing better certified than that God has communicated with man in this way (Ps 89:19; Prov 29:18; compare Amos 8:11-12; Hos 12:10). If one is disposed to regard the method as suited only to primitive peoples and superstitious natures, it still remains true that the experience is one associated with lives and characters of the most saintly and exalted kind (1 Sam 3:1; Jer 1:11; Ezek 1:1; Dan 2:19; Acts 9:10; 10:3; 16:9). (From International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Electronic Database Copyright © 1996, 2003, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

Reading II: Ephesians 5:8-14

FAITH THAT ENLIGHTENS - LET ME SEE WHAT YOU SEE? From the darkness of prison in Rome, St. Paul encouraged the Christians in Asia Minor (primarily Ephesus) not to be blinded by false doctrine and revert to paganism (v. 1). They should see life with the vision of Jesus Christ to whom they now belong. It is inconsistent for people to have put on Christ and then put on the works of the ungodly. (2:1-3; 3:17-24; Matt. 5:14; Col. 1:12-13). To do so would make Christians no different than those who thrive in the immoral and perverse cultures of the world.

St. Paul reminded the Ephesians that as children of light, they were required to constantly try to determine, that is, discern, the will of God (v. 10). Those who see what God sees should not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but expose them and chastise believers whose conduct is contrary to the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (v.11). St. Paul tells all of us to wake up and see what God sees. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How do you distinguish evil from good?

Gospel: John 9:1-41

A FAITH THAT ENLIGHTENS – LET ME SEE WHAT YOU SEE?

We are blind to our blindness. Consider the two police officers in Hayward, California, who beat a blind man with their batons after mistaking his collapsible cane for an illegal martial arts weapon. The officers did not identify themselves, and the man fought back, thinking he was being mugged.

What do we really know? We are made in the image and likeness of God, who sees all, knows all and is all. Yet, we are limited by our own vision and don't know how little we know. We walk by faith and not by sight. That is why we must see with the eyes of a follower of Christ and constantly pray to see what God sees.

The miracle in this Gospel occurred in Jerusalem and dramatically shows the merciful kindness of Jesus, "the light of the world," who gives sight to the blind. He not only restores physical sight, but He also restores the light of faith. But the light that Jesus gives also blinds others. Giving sight to the blind is the most common miracle performed by Jesus (see Matt. 9:27-31; 12:22-23; 15:30-31; 21:14; Mark 8:22-26; 10:46-52; Luke 7:21-22). In the Old Testament, such miracles were associated with God Himself and with Messianic activity. (Exod. 4:11; Ps. 146:8, Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7)

Who saw what Jesus saw? The disciples did not. Their question about the cause of the man's illnesses (v. 2) reflects the common view of Jews of Jesus' day and some today, that illness is God's punishment. The Old Testament taught that sin brings divine punishment (e.g., Exod. 20:5; 34:7; Ezek. 18:4). But note that while sin may lie behind all the suffering and evil in the world, the connection between sin and suffering is not always clear. (See Job; 2 Cor. 12:7; Gal. 4:13). The disciples did not look at the man as one in need of mercy but saw him as the focus of a theological discussion.

The Pharisees did not see as Jesus saw. They viewed the mercy of Jesus as a threat to their power and order. The parents of the blind man did not see what Jesus saw. They saw their son's cure as a threat to their social status and security. However, the blind man saw what Jesus saw. His physical blindness allowed him to return the mercy shown him and defend Jesus. His reward was to see Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** With which character in the Gospel do you most closely identify? Why? Is suffering a sign of God's judgment on us? Do bad things happen to good people? Why?

Pray About It!

Monday

Read Isaiah 60:1. Ask God to see what He sees.

Tuesday

Read Mark 8:23. Help someone see what God has done for you.

Wednesday

Read Luke 7:21-22. Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Thursday

Read Galatians 4:13. Spend time with a family member you have neglected.

Friday

Attend Mass, receive the Eucharist and meditate on the Stations of the Cross.

See What God Sees.

In the words of Pope Francis, goodness always tends to spread. Every authentic experience of truth and goodness seeks by its very nature to grow within us, and any person who has experienced a profound liberation becomes more sensitive to the needs of others. As it expands, goodness takes root and develops. If we wish to lead a dignified and fulfilling life, we have to reach out to others and seek their good. In this regard, several sayings of Saint Paul will not surprise us: "The love of Christ urges us on" (2 Cor 5:14); "Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:16)
From: Joy of the Gospel - EVANGELII GAUDIUM, II.9. The delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, p. 9

Resources: John Neal M. Flanagan, O.S.M. ; Collegeville Bible Commentary, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., p. 992-995; Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year A 2017, Joyce Zimmerman, C. PP. S. Kathleen Harmon, S.ND. de N., Christopher W. Canlon, S. M. Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 86-89; Scripture texts in this work are taken from the New American Bible, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner. Utne Reader, Sept./Oct. 1990, The Sunday Readings Cycle A, Kevin O' Sullivan, O.F.M. Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 127-133; http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.html#The_joy_of_the_gospel

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in Adult Faith Formation at St. Peter Claver and St Maria Goretti Parishes in New Orleans, La. ©2017