

09-05-2021

“Seeing is Believing”

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This passage we have from Mark is short and sweet, it's simply about Jesus' healing someone who cannot see, someone who is blind. So what do we do with this passage? Do we simply think that if our eyesight begins to fail us, that that is the time we go to Jesus and find him to help heal us? I think it is always appropriate to go to Jesus for that type of healing, and yet, as we have been reading Jesus has invited us to see things as more than simply the way that something happens, that there might be a little more to the story.

Remember last week, he was talking to the disciples about the yeast of the Pharisees, and since he was talking about yeast, they assumed he must have been talking about the bread they had brought along, and that they hadn't brought enough, and so they began to apologize for not bringing enough bread. He wasn't talking about that at all. He was using that idea of yeast to give an idea that something can begin to grow in us that isn't helpful. I wonder if there isn't a way in which this passage isn't about more than this one healing or that it's only about our physical lives. I wonder if the question might be at times, not whether my eyesight is failing, or not whether I am blind, but how I might be blind. It feels a little bit to me like that is what James is talking about today, about how we don't always fully see what we are called to be, or what we are to do, or what faith is about. He gives that wonderful example of; if two people come and one person is dressed nicely and the other one is not, how do you treat them? His question is one of how do you see other people? How do we see our neighbor and what distinctions do we use in that process? Do we judge some as those we don't pay any attention to? Do we use wealth as one of those ways of distinction? Do we use race? Do we use status? What ways do we see one another?

James seems to be inviting us to recognize that the way God has invited us in Jesus to see others, is without partiality. Without that kind of distinction, to see each other person as a child of God. He digresses a little bit to say, besides who's really the oppressor? It's kind of an interesting little digression he puts in there; look and see how things are working, really it's not about worldly wealth, often times, that can lead to oppression, look for the richness of faith in someone's life. What riches does a life have? A richness of faith, or is it worldly riches? Because often they are not the same. In fact, he suggests that often the poor have a greater faith.

James is asking us some hard questions. Some questions about our own blindness, how we might not see the way God sees. What are the barriers we have, in the way we look at things, that makes it hard for us to love our neighbors as ourselves? To remember that it is God's mercy that has given us the hope we have. And that it is not judgement that gives hope, it's mercy. And that mercy wins out over judgement. As I am thinking about this idea that mercy wins out over judgement, I recognize how easy it is for me to take the way I have grown up or the messages I have experienced, and to use those as ways of judging. And just when I think that I have understood Jesus and I am beginning to really follow Jesus, it feels to me like I really fall into those places where I haven't quite been fully healed. I run into a moment where it feels a little like that description of the fellow that is being healed. I see, but I

only see trees walking, I don't quite see fully. And it's a reminder to me that I need to go back, and stay in relationship with Jesus so that I might truly be fully healed. It is, you might say, as we allow Jesus to heal the way we see, whatever blindness we might have in our lives, that seeing is believing. Often times we might say that, seeing is believing, as if when we see something that will help us believe it. In this respect, it feels to me like, when my seeing is healed, when I begin to see with the eyes of Jesus, when I begin to see through his teachings and his grace, that seeing is believing. It is truly trusting in Him and living out the life he is truly calling me to, us to.

James doesn't want to leave us with just the idea that now we can see, that seeing means that we have clarity. Seeing for James is not only knowing, but doing. It's the taking of what we can see, and recognizing when someone is in need, and responding. Not only knowing the mercy of God, the grace of God for us, but how that impels us to show that grace to others.

It's interesting to me how we come today and have communion, there's a way in which the communion table is an example of God's way. It's a table that everyone is invited to. It's a table in which we recognize the sustenance God gives us. It's a table at which God takes everyone who comes and creates of us a community, a family, a people who care, and it's a table that helps us remember the wonder of God's forgiving love, that sends us forth to share that love. In some ways, it is another way, a symbol, a sign, a way God describes the very way we are called to be. We welcome all people in our lives and try to bring the very sustenance God gives us to those relationships and lets those relationships form.

Doris, the other day, suggested that each of the sermons have focused on being good. And in some ways that is really true, each one has been about how God calls us to be good and be good to each other, and each one comes at it for a little bit of a different angle reminding us of a particular way in which we might be good. Today we are reminded that Jesus heals blindness, and we all have our own form of blindness. We need the healing of our own way of making distinctions, so that we have the ability to love our neighbors as ourselves and so that we can show mercy that triumphs over judgement. And, as we see with Jesus' eyes, as we let Jesus heal and guide us, and teach us that seeing is believing, it is truly trusting in Jesus, and not only trusting in Jesus but doing the will of God that Jesus reveals for us.

We are challenged to be like the communion table, welcoming, sustaining, moving, being in fellowship. So, this week I invite you to think about what it means to deal with our own partiality, our own ways of seeing, and to come to Jesus and ask for that healing, that our eyes might be opened and that the opening of our eyes leads us to our acting with all of who we are, with our lives. It is incredible that Jesus sees us as children of God, loved by God, invited by God to live out this care for one another, and to see others as he sees us. Amen.