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St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church
4th Sunday in Lent/Year A
March 26, 2017
Text: John 9:1-41

“In Him There Is No Darkness At All”

On this Fourth Sunday in Lent, sight is at the heart of our Scripture passages. In our first reading from Samuel, one can only wonder what God saw in Jesse's youngest son, David. He is not tall and strong like his seven older brothers and probably smelled of sweat and sheep dung yet God saw something in David that even the prophet Samuel could not see. In Psalm 23, God is the Good and Great Shepherd who helps us see our way through dark valleys and death's shadow; who shows us a table brimming over and cups running over with God's grace, mercy and love. The Letter to the Ephesians tells us that once we stumbled in darkness but now we see because of Christ is the light that shows us the way to fruit-filled living.

Then we come to the ninth chapter of John's Gospel and we hear the story of yet another unnamed person, a man born blind who regained his sight. His story is told in contrast to those whose piety and narrow mindedness caused them to be blind to what and to who was right there in front of them.

It was Jesus who saw the man born as he begged alms. “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?” his disciples asked for they were more interested in whose sin caused his blindness than in the actual man. But Jesus wasn't interested in finding fault as people had grown accustomed to doing. Instead, Jesus saw an opportunity to show God's power working in the world. So he makes mud and puts it on the man's eyes and tells him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. And the man comes back able to see.

Instead of celebrating the man's healing, the whole experience was raked over the coals. Many of neighbors had a hard time deciding that it was the same man who had been blind. The Pharisees then took issue as they haggled over the issue of sin and who was to blame and their interpretation of the Law for it was the Sabbath day when no work at all was to be done. Some of them even insisted that Jesus too, must be a sinner and not from God. They failed to see God's power in their midst. And if that weren't enough, the man's own parents failed to see that God had done a new thing in their son. And they were afraid because anyone who

confessed Jesus to be the Messiah, the One sent by God, would be tossed out of the synagogue.

The man who was once physically blind since birth was the only one who saw Jesus for who he is, the Son of Man, the Light come into the world. And those who thought themselves to see and know all, are called blind by Jesus because they only stumbled deeper in darkness.

Here in Missouri we have a motto that says, "Show me." There are many legends on how this came to be. The most widely known legend attributes the phrase to Missouri's U.S. Congressman Willard Duncan Vandiver, who served in the United States House of Representatives in the late 1800's. While he was a member of the U.S. House Committee on Naval Affairs, Vandiver attended a naval banquet in Philadelphia. During his speech Vandiver declared, "I come from a state that raises corn and cotton and cockleburs and Democrats, and frothy eloquence neither convinces nor satisfies me. I am from Missouri. You have got to show me."*

Often when Jesus showed others the power of God, there were those who did not believe and we are often like them: blind and unmoved by what God is doing in and around us. Sometimes, no matter who we are or what we do in life, we tend to be short-sighted and fixed in our own little world-our world being those things that only pertain to our individual selves, our families, and maybe our neighborhood, our church. We sometimes fail to see the bigger picture because we are otherwise occupied, too busy to see, and we only know what we know, what we know just like the Pharisees in today's Gospel.

God always shows us his works. Miracles and signs happen every day but until we open our eyes to see them, we are blind. And when we hold on to negativity, resentment, pride, stubbornness, self-centeredness, we are choosing blindness. When we fail to see our neighbor-that man, woman, or child, we are choosing blindness. When we ignore the poor, the hungry, the suffering, the marginalized of society, we are choosing blindness. When we prefer to not to see God's glory right in front of our noses, we are choosing blindness.

Jesus came so that we would no longer walk in the darkness. He is the Son of Man, the One sent by God, the Light of the world. "He", as one theologian has said, "enters in the muddiness of the world and gets his hands dirty for our sake." In him, our eyes are opened.

Sisters and brothers, when we let Jesus touch us with sight, there is no more darkness at all. And we are able see with eyes of faith that which is right in front of us-the magnificence of God's creation and the blessings that God wishes to accomplish through us.

Like the man who was once blind and received his sight, let us boldly testify to the One who came to shed his light for in him there is power to change the world for:

*In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike.
The Lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in our hearts (my heart),
Lord Jesus.*

Amen.

*taken from *Official Manual of the State of Missouri*, Missouri History: Why is Missouri Called the "Show-Me" State?