

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

The Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost: October 24, 2021

“Seeing God”

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Good morning, everyone, back here in our little squares, and a good thing as the weather is fierce today. It is interesting that the reading of Job and the reading of the Gospel have the same common thread, seeing God. I have to admit that seeing God is something we all have opportunities to do, you just have to know how to look.

I would like to begin with Job. We have reached the end of the trials and tribulations of Job and it would seem that the ending is a little disappointing and contradicts the lesson of justification as Job gets returned to him all that was taken and then some. But what we need to factor in is that Job repented. Job then began to pray for his friends and others. Job finally understood the greatness of the Lord.

As the story goes, Job has had everything he ever loved and anything he owned destroyed. The story has it that it was Satan who was responsible for this in a gamble with God. However Job, even through his losses, finds hope, finds salvation, and finds God.

Job responds to the divine speeches by acknowledging that he has neither God’s power nor God’s wisdom. “I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know”. He had accused God of creating a world of chaos, and God responded by showing Job the world as it really is, opening his eyes to a place of order, but also of freedom and beauty, not centered on human

beings, full of wild creatures that Job never imagined in his former life. And through that vision of creation, Job's fierce hope is fulfilled. From the depths of despair Job for an instant sees what God sees, beauty in all creation.

After the divine speeches, Job says to God, "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you". Somehow, through the grand vision of God's creation, Job's profound desire to be in the presence of God has been fulfilled. He has seen God. And that vision moves him out of despair into life again.

Interestingly enough, it is pretty clear that this story is just that - a story. But the lesson it teaches through what may be considered a trite ending has profound consequence.

The real ending to be explored is how much it costs Job to become a father again, to regain his hold on life. Like a Holocaust survivor whose greatest act of courage is to bear children after a disaster, Job chooses against all odds to live again. Job and his wife choose to bear children into a world full of heart-rending beauty *and* heart-breaking pain. Job chooses to love again, even when he knows the cost of such love, because his eyes are open to God's bigger plans.

In our Gospel today we have another rag tag man. Maybe he looked a little like Job in the midst of his troubles. Who knows? But this man is blind. And just like Job, who in his distress calls upon God, the blind man calls out to Jesus. Both men in our readings today expect a reasonable answer from God. Jesus hears the blind man's cries, just as God heard Job. Both asked for mercy and had their eyes opened to see the glory of God. Through their struggles and persistence in requiring God to notice them, they realized they have already been seen.

Isn't it like that when we are troubled or are grieving? The world gets smaller and we go inward and we can't find solace within ourselves. When we struggle to find

the good in ourselves and those around us, well, that's when Satan (or more likely negativity) gets in the way of our seeing God's plan for us; and the goodness that is right there in front of us. The same happens when we are on a "roll" so to speak and everything is amazing and wonderful. Then we still go inward and we end up consoling ourselves and worshiping what we have done. And once again we are blind to God's plan for us - blind again to the real goodness that is right there in front of us.

I bet there is not an emotion or experience that when taken too far, doesn't lead us down that path of stroking the ego: anger, vengeance, greed, fear. This is the recipe for blindness. In order to open our eyes and see God, we have to want to connect. You can connect with nature, if that is your choice. You can explore the animal kingdom in whatever way is appropriate for you. I challenge you to go look at a fallen leaf and wonder what its part within creation is and how, even though small, frail and in a state of death, it is fulfilling God's purpose. Let us open our eyes. "My teacher, let me see again."

We see God when we come to church. We see God in the symbol of the cross, honored with the gold or silver on the altar, the pictures, the songs. We can take the time to study scripture and open our eyes to how God has worked in the past, and how he continues to work today. At our Convention yesterday it was beautiful to see our diocese working to show God's work within our church system, focusing on mercy, recognition, equality, creation and social justice.

When we, like Job and the blind man, have had our faith make our soul well, we will see God in each other. We will see God in the immigrant, the poor, the lonely, the old and the young. We will see God smile at the dinner table, hold our hand going out for a walk. We will see God at the food pantry, at work, at play. We will see God in all our human interactions.

We will open our eyes to see our losses as just that: losses. Losses that happen in an imperfect world, but losses that can also teach us life lessons which, in turn, we can teach to others. We can take that pride and exhilaration and share in it with those who helped us on the way, since we never truly do anything absolutely alone. We need to learn to take our anger, fear, whatever emotion, and feel it, claim it, and then bring it to God in prayer. Let God open our eyes to see the gift in that experience, remembering the world was not created just for human beings or our egos.

We know Job moved forward in his life as was expected, learning to love again, and renewing his relationship with God. Our blind man in the gospel regains his sight and then continues to follow Jesus.

My challenge to you this week is to open your eyes and know your faith has made you well. Amen