

SERMON: RESTORED

PRAYER Dear God, We have much to be thankful for this Lenten Season that brings us nearer to you and closer together. Our prayers continue to be mindful of what is going on in the lives of our members, friends, family and one another. We thank you for the ongoing care for Amber, daughter of Mike and Debbie Cantonwine, the joy our congregation is poised to celebrate in anticipation of seeing Kelsey Leonard, her husband Vincent and their son Luke. We are grateful this morning that Theda Rudd and Bob Ross have returned with the news that their son, David is healing and will continue to do so without surgery. We do thank you, God for all that is known and unknown to us, in all the particulars of our individual lives that make us whole. We thank you for another week of life and support as we seek and receive the care that keeps us alive and the love that makes us glad we are. Our prayers this morning are with Bob Rydell who continues in dialysis. Be with Bob and each and every one of us as we give you all honor, glory, thanks and praise for our lives, our faith and the opportunity to see who we are in your name.

JOHN (9:1-41) We are on our way to the cross with Jesus this morning; gathered for worship to hear the gospel of John who invites us to think about who we are in light of the cross. This forth Sunday in Lent we have three weeks to go before Easter is upon us. Time for us to see who Jesus is and for us to see who we are. We are not alone in failing to see that which is right in front of us.

Our study group on Wednesday opened my eyes. After sharing a meal we engaged in conversation based on 10 practices that promise to foster genuine connections through good communication. As I participated in the discussion I realized that even in the moment, I was violating at least 5 of practices. Throughout my time with you I am challenged to see who you are as individuals and as part of this body of Christ.

The gospel lesson for this morning invites us to contemplate the distinction between blindness and seeing. John is telling us the story of a man who was blind before he could see. This story is about those who have been able to see from birth, yet have failed to see the purpose and the meaning of faith. John had observed what we know to be true in our own experience. Human beings have a tendency to blame others for their own predicament in life, and to blame others for our own shortcomings, failures and inadequacies. In a way, John is revealing Jesus who does not have time for blame, of any sort. In this lesson about a man who was born blind, John wants us to see that it was not the fault of the man who could not see.

Whatever the predicament or circumstance may be, it is all too easy to place blame instead of doing something about what we see. An interesting thing about this story is that even when the man who was blind could see, the people around him failed to notice. I suspect that is because we tend to tune out and ignore people who remind us of our vulnerabilities, and our responsibilities to act in the name

of God. The law-givers did not want to take in who Jesus was and what he was doing because it was beyond what they were doing. Their power and status was defined by law and tradition. The power of Jesus comes from everyone who recognizes him for who he is.

We worship God because Jesus helps us to see who God is. And Jesus helps us to see who we can become by fulfilling our own potential as people of faith. When we believe and stop looking for reasons not to believe, we are better able to see how best to use the gifts and talents that God has given us. A week does not go by that I do not see our members and friends being present for their neighbors, friends, and strangers. There is something more difficult than having sight restored. It is overcoming the ways of the world that make us think we can see, when in fact we have yet to discover what we are looking at, what we are hearing and how that influences our attention and the application of our gifts.

EPHESIANS (5: 8-14) Seeing who we are as people who believe in God does more than restore how we see things, it transforms us. We become the light in a dark world by living as people of God. Not the kind of glaring brilliance that draws attention to ourselves, rather the light presented in the letter to the Ephesians that consists of goodness, righteousness and truth.

BENEDICTION: Even when we may be doing our very best, we realize that we can do even better when we see ourselves as others see us.