

“Seeing Through the Eyes of Christ”

First Presbyterian Church
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Old Testament Lesson: Exodus 34:29-32

New Testament Lesson: 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

One day a young priest discovered that the janitor of his church – St. Peter’s in London – was illiterate, and he fired him. Jobless, the man invested his meager savings in a tiny tobacco shop, where he prospered, bought another, expanded, and ended up with a chain of tobacco stores worth several hundred thousand dollars. One day the man’s banker said, “You’ve done well for an illiterate, but where would you be if you could read and write?” “Well,” replied the man, “I’d be the janitor of St. Peter’s Church.”¹

How often have we settled for “good enough” when something truly amazing is just around the corner? If only we could see around corners, right like some superpower?!? Well, that’s just what the Apostle Paul is encouraging us to do – see around corners, or as he puts it, to see through the veil that blocks our view of the hope and power to come.

What would it be like to live life as someone who knows the future?!? That’s just what we’re going to look at during our sermon time this morning, so that when you leave here, you leave with the certainty of someone who knows the future! Pretty cool, right?

To help us get there, Paul draws a distinction between believers and non-believers, those who are open to Christ and those who are closed off. The Israelites standing before Moses as he descended the mountain of the Lord were closed off. “... Their minds were hardened,” says Paul. “Indeed,” he says, “to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside.”

Paul is saying that we can’t see things clearly in life unless we look at them through the eyes of Jesus. The Christian Counselor Dr. Eric Scalise, in his article “See Through the Eyes of Christ,” puts it this way: The *world* saw only that Jesus was eating with tax gatherers and sinners... but *Jesus* saw people in need of the great physician. ... The *world* saw only a group of children annoying the Master ... but *Jesus* saw their innocent trust and a kingdom that belonged to such as these. The *world* saw only a crooked tax gatherer named Zacchaeus, becoming rich through the suffering of others ... but *Jesus* saw a man ready to be broken with an act of repentance. ...

¹ Bits and Pieces, June 24, 1993, p. 23, quoting Somerset Maugham, the English writer.

The *world* saw only five loaves and two fish to feed so many ... but *Jesus* saw a great multitude hungry and in need of compassion. ...

The *world* saw only a robber crucified as a common thief ... but *Jesus* saw a lost soul worth dying for.

How do we develop such vision – vision that sees a better tomorrow amid today’s struggle and uncertainty, and a sure pathway to get there?!? We do so by always looking through the lens of hope and faith, instead of looking at our world and all its problems with hardened hearts.

Consider for instance the words and wisdom of the Rev. Susan Cooke Kittredge on National Public Radio’s *Weekend Edition*.² “I have come to relish the moments when I sit down and, somewhat clumsily, repair a torn shirt, hem a skirt, patch a pair of jeans, and I realize that I believe in mending. ...

Mending something is different from fixing it,” she says. “Fixing it suggests that evidence of the problem will disappear. I see mending as a preservation of history and a proclamation of hope.

When we mend broken relationships we realize that we’re better together than apart, and perhaps even stronger for the rip and the repair. ...

I can’t stop the war in Iraq,” she says. “I can’t reverse global warming, I can’t solve the problems of my community or the world, but I can mend things at hand. I can darn a pair of socks. ...

Mending doesn’t say, ‘This never happened.’ It says, instead, as I believe the Christian cross does, ‘Something or someone was surely broken here, but with God’s grace it will rise to new life.’”

Those are the words of someone who sees the world – not through a hardened heart – but through the eyes of Jesus, being able to have hope amid war, climate change, and all the world’s problems because of the promise of Christ, and being able to see that hope in something as simple as mending a sock. When we see through the eyes of Christ, we have super powers to make the world a better place.

Compare this with the lack of vision and wisdom shown in the following little story.

² February 3, 2008

There was once a man of great wisdom who heard a young man declare, "I will not believe in the existence of what has never been seen; we are creatures of reason, you know."

"Have you ever seen France?" asked the wiseman. "No, sir, but others have, and so my reason allows me to believe in its existence based upon their testimony."

"Ah, you will believe only in what you or another has seen."

"That's it," said the young man, "you have my idea exactly."

"Have you ever seen your brains?" asked the wiseman. "No, sir."

"Have you ever met anyone who has seen them?" "No sir."

"Do you believe you have any?" With that, the young man was made wiser.

The point is, if we put our hope and faith only in what can be seen clearly and fully, then we miss out on so much of who God is and what God offers. None of us is able to claim full knowledge of God and a clear vision of heaven on earth, as it is above. But those of us who believe in Jesus Christ can glimpse God's glory all around us; we can rest assured in the promise of a better tomorrow; we can live – and die – knowing we have a place with God beyond time and space, beyond any of our worldly problems and worries.

That is what it is to live with your "face unveiled," as Paul puts it, to live in faith, "seeing the glory of the Lord ..., and being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another...."

Even though none of us sees the fullness of God's glory, we can all come to see it more and more, day by day, as we grow spiritually. Each time you overcome a hopeless situation, you come to know the promise of God's faithfulness. And in that, as Paul says, "We do not lose heart."

In fact, he says, "... We act with great boldness," showing ourselves and all the world what it is to live in faith, to know and trust the promises of God, to set our sights on the certainty of life eternal in Jesus Christ.

Whatever you might be struggling with, unsure of, or working toward, the one sure thing is that more will be revealed, that as you rely on Christ to show you the next right thing, God will guide you to a deeper faith, a faith that is sufficient to relieve any pain from the past, overcome any problems of today, and provide you with sure hope for a brighter tomorrow. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER

If we were not a Christian today, would we act differently? Help us, O Lord, to be more understanding today because of our trust in Christ?

We want to be more loving, more helpful, more relaxed, more hopeful, more joyous.

God, there is probably someone who needs to be helped, to be understood. May we think of others' needs as we visit or telephone them.

We pray for those dealing with the lack of basic necessities, and especially the families up north who've lost homes in the flooding. We pray for the family and friends of those taken by the flood.

Lord, we pray also for those dealing with illness and disease, and all those we continue to keep in prayer.

We pray, too, for the church, O Lord, and ask that you help us to live in such a way that others will see the brightness of you through our words and actions.

It is with this hope – this promise – that we join our voices in prayer, as you taught us, saying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**