

Prayer of Thanksgiving: *The Lord is here. God's spirit is with us. Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give thanks and praise. Loving and gracious God, open our eyes to the wonders that surround us, let us truly see and, in seeing, come to believe that you are the creator of all. Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.* (Continue in prayer) *By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to the world, Spirit of the living God, open our eyes to the presence of Jesus in the breaking of the bread and sharing of the cup. Give us new insight into this sacrament we share, that we may truly be the church of Christ in the world - through Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honour and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever more. (Our Father...)*

Hymn: Here O my Lord I see thee (1-3) 543

Communion

Prayer following communion: *Loving God, help us now to go out and share what we have seen and heard with a world that often walks in darkness. Jesus is the light of the world and we will follow him.*

We follow our faithful Lord. These times, they are troubling. This journey, it is hard... We follow our faithful Lord.

It is God who sustains the journey, not the temptations of this world... We follow our faithful Lord. In the Lord is our trust, our protection from harm... We follow our faithful Lord. Our eyes are open and we continue the journey... We follow our faithful Lord.

Hymn: Be thou my vision (1 and 5) 461

WELCOME TO...

The Presbyterian Church of *Saint David*

March 26, 2017



MANY WAYS TO BE BLIND

Gathering: *You call us to be your light in the darkness, your voice in the wilderness, your hope for the hopeless. You give us strength in our weakness, peace and gentleness, words and boldness, to proclaim more of you and of us, less.*

Hymn: Open our eyes

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Confession: *Lord, I am blind – for I am afraid. Lord, I am blind – for I do not want to see. You promise to heal the blind – and that terrifies me. I have seen the light – and I want to close my eyes. I ask you to shake me, but I fear being broken. I ask you to bless me, but I fear being made whole.* ...time of silent prayer...

Assurance: *The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Even we shall believe, even we shall be led back to faith, by the grace and mercy of the one who never stops seeking us, healing us, restoring our sight. We are loved, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God! Amen.*

Intro: John 9 is about light and darkness and healing and wholeness. First of all, this healing story challenges the acts-consequences understanding of suffering. In this understanding, there is a direct and linear relationship between what we do and what happens to us: the good prosper and enjoy health; the evil suffer and become diseased. Jesus addresses the problem of evil, in response to a peculiar question, “Who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?” This question raises a variety of further questions:

- Is the suffering of children fully attributable to their parents’ impact, whether in terms of DNA, quality of relationship, or economics?
- Is this man suffering from the prenatal behaviours of his parents or some prenatal act on his part?

Scripture: **John 9:1-41** (excerpt) As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying

to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

Hymn: Open my eyes

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John told this story and used these images of seeing and not seeing, believing and not believing, to help an early Christian community find themselves in that story. They knew what it felt like to be driven out of the synagogue by the religious authorities, to be expelled from their "church home".

The man whose sight is given to him by Jesus makes his way, like all of us, toward belief and understanding, not suddenly or easily but in the course of a long story that leads to another personal encounter with Jesus.... (Maybe we need a refresher on how Paul enters the Christian story.) Now the question for us, today, is about finding ourselves in the story. I don't know about you, but I always prefer the role of the people Jesus helps, rather than the role of the Pharisees and whoever else is judging him. This is an especially uncomfortable question for pastors and other religious leaders, but it works for all of us inside the church.

Invitation: *Are you looking for grace? For hope? For salvation? For sight? For forgiveness? For company? Come, eat and drink! Here you will find Grace beyond measure. Hope that sustains. A promise of life, companions who will embrace you – women and men who will give of themselves. Come to this table, where Jesus embodied love, and eat until you are satisfied.*

Hymn: Open my eyes

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